GOULD LIBRARY
EASTERN NAZARENE COLLEGE

a. Lear

REV. B. H. MAYBURY
20 DENISON STREET
HARTFORD, CONN. 06105

MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM C. BURNS, M.A.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2015

https://archive.org/details/memoirofrevwmcbu00burn_0

W.H. MOTE Sc

Wm C Burns.

MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. WM. C. BURNS, M.A.,

MISSIONARY TO CHINA

FROM THE ENGLISH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

BY THE LATE

REV. ISLAY BURNS, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY,
FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW.

"Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions (or hardships), do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry."—2 Tim. iv. 5.

NEW EDITION.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET, W.
1885.

Gould
BV
3427
B83B37
1885X

GLASGOW:
W. G. BLACKIE AND CO., PRINTERS
VILLAFIELD.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS edition of the "Memoir," as the title-page indicates, is a posthumous one. Its loved and lamented author has passed within the veil, to be the sharer, we may not doubt, of his sainted brother's joy, as he had been the follower of his faith, and the loving, like-minded memorialist of his work, as a servant of the Lord Jesus. He has not been spared to complete, as he had begun, the revisal of the volume, or to see it in its new form. He continued at work upon it as long as he was able; and he had made considerable progress, when at last his strength failed him, his Master's summons came, and the pen dropped from his hand. The remaining part had to be provided for otherwise, and it was in compliance with a wish expressed by him a day or two before his death, that I undertook to do what he left undone,—aided by the suggestions of those nearest to him, with whom he was wont to take counsel, and who knew his mind best. The disadvantage attending a publication, thus posthumous to so very limited an extent, will not, I trust, be found to be considerable. His endeavour was, and mine has been, while diminishing as much as possible the size of the volume so as to bring it within the reach of a wide circle of readers, to whom the possession of it, at least, has hitherto been unattainable, to diminish as little as possible its value, or its interest; perhaps even to increase the latter,—by abridging those parts of it which are least personal to its subject, and so rendering it even more distinctively than it was, a Biography of William Burns. The details of his work in China, as well as the statements of his missionary brethren in regard to it (in which there has been most abridgment), are no doubt, in the estimation of some, superior in interest to anything else, and to the value of the information thus supplied the strongest testimony has been borne from many quarters; but that class of readers is not, comparatively, a large one; and the pain of excision in those parts of the volume has been greatly lessened by the consideration that in its unabridged form it is still accessible, and is intended to be kept in circulation, as heretofore. It was even more painful to be under the necessity of curtailing the extracts from his Journal of mission work at home, at Dundee, in Edinburgh, in the Highlands, and elsewhere, in which home-readers will naturally take the deepest interest, all the more, in the knowledge of what a mass of equally interesting matter remains behind, almost untouched. But this has been done also as sparingly as might be, the best parts have all been retained, while the samples given are such as to convey a faithful, if not a full idea of the whole. What the author says (in his preface to the first edition) was his "single aim," he did, by common consent, to a wonderful degree succeed in accomplishing, viz. "to present a true and life-like portrait of him whose footsteps he had undertaken to trace;" and what was true of the work before, will be found scarcely, if at all, less true of the work still, "so that being dead he may yet speak, just as he spoke while he was with us, to the praise of that divine grace which he so greatly magnified, and by which alone, as he so profoundly felt, he was what he was."

J. C. B.

Free Church Manse, Kirkliston, 1873.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE difficulty I anticipated in writing the Biography of one so nearly related to me was very soon forgotten as I proceeded with my task, and felt more and more deeply how utterly insignificant are all such earthly ties, in presence of the higher relations of that eternal kingdom in which my lamented Brother so entirely lived. If, while he was still with us, it was possible for those most closely connected with him in some measure to know him "after the flesh," one instantly felt so soon as he had passed within the veil that henceforth we could know him so no more.

The materials from which the narrative has been drawn are—1st, My own personal recollections and those of other intimate friends; 2d, Private letters addressed chiefly to members of his own family; and 3d, Copious journals, extending over the whole period of his home ministry, and continued, though in a briefer and more fragmentary manner, during the early years of his residence in China. From these last I have quoted very largely, but not more so I believe than those who are really interested in his work would wish me to have done. Indeed, the difficulty often was merely to *extract* from a document, which many readers doubtless would have wished to possess entire.

To the many friends to whom I have been indebted for valuable materials, I have made acknowledgment in the course of the work at the places where their communications have been used; but I would here specially mention the names of the late Rev. Dr. Burns, of Toronto, who contributed the tenth chapter; the Rev. Duncan M'Gregor, M.A., of Dundee, and the Rev. Dr. Kirkpatrick, of Dublin, who furnished the graphic sketches of my Brother's labours in Edinburgh and Dublin; and the Rev. Carstairs Douglas, M.A. of Amoy, to whose loving and painstaking endeavours I am indebted for almost all the precious memorials from China which enrich the closing chapters.

My single aim has been to present a true and life-like picture of him whose footsteps I had undertaken to trace; and that thus being dead he may yet speak, just as he spoke while he was with us, to the praise of that divine grace which he so greatly magnified, and by which alone, as he so profoundly felt, he was what he was.

FREE CHURCH COLLEGE, GLASGOW,
December 6th, 1869.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE
EARLY YEARS, ... 1

CHAPTER II.

PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY, ... 20

CHAPTER III.

OPENING MINISTRY, ... 37

CHAPTER IV.

REVIVAL SCENES, ... 56

CHAPTER V.

ST. PETER'S, DUNDEE, ... 76

CHAPTER VI.

ST. ANDREW'S, PERTH, &C., ... 92

CHAPTER VII.

LABOURS AT ABERDEEN, ... 108

CHAPTER VIII.

WORK AMONG THE MOUNTAINS, ... 123

CHAPTER IX.

NEWCASTLE, EDINBURGH, DUBLIN, ... 140

CHAPTER X.

CANADA, ... 167

CHAPTER XI.

PAGE
CALL TO THE CHINESE FIELD, ... 189

CHAPTER XII.

DEPARTURE FOR CHINA, ... 203

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FIELD AND ITS PIONEERS, ... 214

CHAPTER XIV.

BREAKING GROUND, ... 220

CHAPTER XV.

CANTON, ... 238

CHAPTER XVI.

AMOY, ... 243

CHAPTER XVII.

FIRST-FRUITS, ... 259

CHAPTER XVIII.

SHANGHAE, SWATOW, &c., ... 274

CHAPTER XIX.

OLD SCENES AND NEW, ... 307

CHAPTER XX.

PEKING AND NIEU-CHWANG, ... 323

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION, ... 349

APPENDIX, ... 363

MEMOIR

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM C. BURNS, M.A.

CHAPTER I.

1815–1832.

EARLY YEARS.

WILLIAM CHALMERS BURNS, the subject of the present memoir, was the third son of the Rev. William Hamilton Burns, D.D., minister successively of Dun in Angus, and of Kilsyth in Stirlingshire, and was born in the manse of the former parish on the 1st day of April, 1815. It was a quiet and gentle spot, full of stillness and peace, nestling, with the adjoining church and graveyard, close within the bosom of a romantic dell, amid the shadows of ancient trees and the hoarse chorus of rooks high overhead, which seemed rather to increase than to break the silence. A little beyond, reached by a rustic bridge across an arm of the ravine, was the gray mansion-house of the Erskines, with its antique garden and bowling-green and smooth-shaven lawn, carrying back the thoughts into the far past, as associated in popular tradition with stories of "the good Superintendent" and the brave John Knox. With this tranquil scene, little suggestive of profound spiritual experiences or intense moral struggles, were his earliest memories linked. To the neighbouring cathedral city of Brechin, too, of which a paternal uncle was then minister, and which by the continual coming and going of cousins and common friends had become to us as another home, our thoughts in after-days often recurred—with the fine old church and churchyard, and the castle steep and the castle pool, and the quaint streets, and the fair sunny gardens, and the scarlet-vested town's officers, the objects to us of continual wonderment; and chief of all, the reverend face and form of the good pastor, whose very look was a benediction,—all bright for ever in the golden light of childhood. In his sixth year, however, all this was left behind, and became as the dreamy reminiscence of a bygone world. In the year 1821 his father was translated to a wider and more stirring sphere, where the family life developed itself henceforth under intenser and more stimulating influences. The village of Kilsyth, situated about twelve miles east of Glasgow, at the foot of an undulating range of picturesque green hills, the gentler continuation of the more rugged Campsie Fells, contains a mixed population of hand-loom weavers, colliers, and shopkeepers, which numbered at that time about 3000 souls, and formed the centre of a parish which in its landward part contained about 2000 more. Here the wheels of life moved more swiftly. There was a greater stir of mind, greater variety of interests, greater impetus and force of existence everyway, intellectual, moral, social. The chatting groups in the market-place and at the street corners, the merry song often sustained in full chorus, blending with the sound of the shuttle in the long loom-shops, the keen party politics and the strong and even bitter denominational sympathies, the eager and sometimes little ceremonious canvassings of ministers and sermons, the collisions and mutual jealousies of class and class, with all the other well-known incidents of a south-country weaving village in the neighbourhood of a great industrial and commercial centre, formed altogether a scene in strong contrast to the still life of our former home. A little to the south of this little busy hive, and separated from it only by a narrow valley, stands the manse, with its sheltering thicket of planes and beeches, and commanding an extensive and beautiful prospect not only of the village and the hills, but over a long strath, level as the sea, to the far west, where the blue summit of Goatfell can be dimly descried from the parlour window in a clear day. Here our second home was established, and our deepest and most lasting home affections nurtured. It was to us a sacred and blessed spot in every sense, full of quiet pleasures, healthy activities, and gentle charities—a manse home, and a manse home of the best type, in which cheerful piety, quiet thoughtfulness, and a modest and reverend dignity of speech and carriage, formed together the purest element in which the young life could develop itself and receive its first impressions of truth and duty. Here of course, as elsewhere, it was the parent that made the home, and in this respect I think we were happy beyond the lot of most. Our father, gentle, reverend, gracious, full of kind thoughts, devout affections, and fresh genial sympathies—serious without moroseness, cheerful and even sometimes gay without lightness, zealous, diligent, conscientious without a touch of impetuous haste, and carrying about with him withal an atmosphere of calm repose, and staid measured dignity, which in these bustling days is becoming increasingly rare—he was the very model of a type of the Christian pastorate which is fast passing away; the father alike and the friend of his whole parish, and the loving centre of everything kind and good and true that is passing within its bounds. To him our mother was in some respects the direct counterpart. Of a nimble buoyant active frame, alike of body and mind, she was all light and life and motion, and was as it were the glad sunshine and bright angel of a house which had been otherwise too still and sombre. There was not in those days under their roof much direct and systematic home education. The influence and teaching of the place was rather felt, or experienced without being felt, than visibly obtruded and pressed upon us. "My father's government was rather calm and strong, than bustling and energetic; he was a regulating and steadying power, rather than a busy executive. He was, in short, felt rather as a presence than seen as an agency; the element in which we lived, the atmosphere which we breathed day by day; something, in short, which was as it were presupposed, and in its silent influence entered into everything that was thought, felt, planned, enjoyed, or suffered within our little world. We were not often or much with him, not so much, I think, as would as a general thing be desirable. His calm and unimpulsive temperament here, as elsewhere, fitted him to act rather by continuous influence, than by distinct and specific efforts. A casual rencounter in the garden walk or in the harvest field; a forenoon drive to some neighbouring manse or country house; half an hour's private reading with his boys in the study before breakfast; above all, the Sabbath evening hour of catechizing and prayer; these, with now and then the reading aloud in the fireside circle of some interesting and popular volume, a task in which he greatly delighted and much excelled—were the chief occasions of direct intercourse and influence between the father and the child. Sometimes, too, along the garden walk at eventide, or through a partition wall at midnight, the ejaculated words of secret meditation and prayer would reach our ears and hearts, like the sounding of the high-priest's bells within the vail."[1] It was in this way that the first touch of serious thought I ever observed in my brother was brought to light. We had lain

[1] *The Pastor of Kilsyth:* a brief biography of Mr. Burns' father, published some years ago, from which this sketch of the home life at Kilsyth is partly taken.

long awake in our common sleeping chamber after some months of separation, talking eagerly of all our ideas and plans of life, in which as yet God and heaven had little share, when the well-known sound from within the sanctuary was heard in the silence. He was hushed at once at least to momentary seriousness, and whispered: "There can be no doubt where *his* heart is, and where he is going." It was not long before the great decisive change took place, and may possibly have been the first living seed of grace that sunk into his heart.—But the more active management of the household and of the home education was safe in the hands of his more nimble and lively partner, who seemed made, if any one ever was, to make home and home duties happy. "Herself the very soul of springy activity and elastic cheerfulness, she kept all around her alive and stirring; while by the infection of her own blithesome and courageous spirit, labour became light and duty pleasant. Never was she so much at home as when, in one of those occasional inundations of friendly kith and kin to which our large connection and central situation exposed us, the manse became too narrow for its inmates, and double-bedded rooms and extemporized shake-downs became the order of the day. Was there now and then, amid this universal quickness and alacrity, a slight tinge of sharpness in chiding the dreamy loiterer and the handless slut? Perhaps so; yet we children scarcely saw it, to whom she ever spoke in the true mother tones of gentleness and love. From her lips and at her knees we learned our earliest lessons of truth, and in her voice and face first traced, as in a clear mirror, the lineaments of that gentle and loving godliness which hath the promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."[1] Such was the element in which my brother's earliest years were spent, and in which his first experiences of life were formed.

---

[1] *The Pastor of Kilsyth.*

There was another household with which, second to our own, our most hallowed thoughts of home and of home life were associated—the manse of Strathblane, situated about twelve miles from Kilsyth, in a quiet valley at the foot of Ballagan, at the other end of the Campsie range. Dr. William Hamilton, the head of that household, and the father of the better known and well-beloved Dr. James Hamilton of London, was my father's ancient friend, and in former days had been used, while the assistant minister of a church in Dundee, to visit us, especially at communion times, in our old home at Dun. His stately form, and a certain almost prophetic majesty of mien and bearing, powerfully impressed us, and his image and voice, as he paced up and down the manse parlour, in eager discourse or with rapt air reciting some favourite snatch of sacred song, remained ever afterwards a cherished tradition in the family. When in after-years the two friends found themselves again established within easy distance of each other, the old relation was resumed, and was kept up not only by the official interchange of services at communion times, but by a cordial intimacy between the families which was signalized by occasional comings and goings in bright summer days along the romantic valley between. Those visits were always seasons of high enjoyment, and revealed to us a phase of the Christian home which was to us in some measure new. Dr. Hamilton was a man far above the common standard of his class and of his time, alike in intellectual stature and in moral elevation and strength. A ripe scholar, a profound divine, and a minister of singular fervour and sanctity, he was characterized at the same time by an enlargement and enlightened liberality of view in regard to all public questions civil and religious, at once admirable and rare. He was an ardent friend of the missionary cause while that cause was yet in its infancy and still suffered the full brunt of the world's scorn. He was a reformer at a time when, to nine-tenths of his order, reform, associated with ideas of revolution and church destruction, was a name of terror. I remember during the days of the Reform Bill, when the whole land was astir with the excitement and the fear of a movement which seemed to most of us like an irruption of the Vandals, hearing with dismay, how a bannered host of workmen from the print-fields in his neighbourhood had actually, at his own desire, filed, to the sound of drum, past his manse, encamped on the green lawn before the door, and received from the good pastor not only words of kindly counsel and encouragement, but "good cheer" also of another and more substantial kind. But it was in his study that he was most at home and in his glory. He had a hunger for books, which fortunately his ample means enabled him to gratify by the accumulation of stores which overflowed far beyond their proper sanctuary into every available nook and corner of the house, and which seemed to us, accustomed to more common things, one of the wonders of the world. The spirit of the father infected the children, and diffused through the place an air of studious application and still quietude which was almost cloistral. Yet was the house happy and cheerful withal. The favourite sports and pastimes, indeed, were like everything else about the place, of the intellectual cast, but none the less on that account bright and gladsome,—a boyish lecture to the literary society at the neighbouring print-fields; an animated discussion of the respective merits of Wilberforce and Brougham, and Grey, and Henry Melville and Dr. Chalmers; or a mock trial in the parlour in the evening, in which boys and girls alike bore their share, and the several parts of judge, jury, panel, and pleading counsel were sustained with an ability and gravity which alike astonished and confounded us. How vividly do I recall the very look and voice with which a fair and gentle girl, "the little one" and the favourite of the family, came forward, with a blithsome air which sadly belied her grim part, shouting, "I'm to be the panel." James, of course, was senior counsel for the crown, as well as the presiding genius of the whole scene; William, his younger brother, and now a respected minister of the Free Church, sat, duly bewigged and gowned, as the most reverend judge, while the remaining parts, I am afraid, broke sadly down in my brother's hands and mine. Altogether it was one of the brightest and holiest spots I have ever known on earth—a place which angels might well visit, or desire to look into in passing by on errands of mercy and grace; so that it seems quite in the natural course of things that there should have proceeded from it the author of the *Mount of Olives* and the *Happy Home.* We returned musing many thoughts, and feeling that we had got a look into a world to which, accustomed to a more outward and muscular style of life, we had been in great measure strangers. My brother's bent, especially, was at this time decidedly in the "muscular" direction. He gave far greater promise of becoming a mighty hunter than a deep student bearing the pale hue of thought. Strong of limb and of sanguine temperament, his heart was in the open fields and woods, and in all manner of manly and athletic exercises. He spent long days with his fishing-rod on the Carron water on the other side of the hills, along with a congenial friend from the village. He wandered for hours along the hedges and through the fields with an old carabine, borrowed from the village blacksmith, in search of sparrows and crows. He was famous for lifting up his axe upon the thick trees, at one time clearing the whole precincts of the superfluous growth of years by his unaided strength. He did yeoman's service on occasions in the hay or corn fields, and was in great request by the "minister's man" when a sudden emergency called for the aid of a volunteer force. I do not remember, at that time, any books which greatly interested him except these two—the *Pilgrim's Progress*, which he read over and over again during a time of confinement occasioned by an accident, and the *Life of Sir William Wallace*, bought with a half-crown given him when a very little boy by Dr. Hamilton. There were, however, few books then fitted to arrest the attention and stir the minds of the young, and especially of boys. There were no *Martin Rattlers*, or *Old Jacks*, or *Tom Browns*. Even such as there were had in their outward appearance a most uninviting aspect. The rude engravings of former days had just been banished, in the interests of high art and good taste, and the more graceful illustrations of present times had not yet come in. Thus the most enchanting of books had, just at that particular juncture, a most repulsive aspect. The *Pilgrim's Progress* was without an effigy even of Giant Pope or the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains. *Robinson Crusoe* was without the shaggy umbrella and the footprint on the shore. Even the *Scots Worthies* and the *Book of Martyrs* were mere acres of black type, without one solemn gleam of the gathered faggots and the aspiring flames, and of the clasped hands and uplifted eyes of martyr faith and victory. Thus there was comparatively little then to allure or to keep within doors a stirring boy, urged by a strong physical impulse toward the open fields and woods. Meanwhile, however, the essential matters of a common school education went on satisfactorily. He attended, all the time of his residence at home, the parish school of the place, then under the care of the Rev. Alexander Salmon, afterwards of Paisley and Sydney, a teacher of rare intelligence and skill, who was among the first Scottish schoolmasters to avail himself of the modern improved methods of tuition, and to substitute an intellectual interest for the old iron sway of the ferula. I have myself a most vivid recollection of the very time when the grim reign of terror came to an end, and the halcyon days of lively questioning and kindly moral influence began. Here my brother did his work well, and kept a good place in all his classes. He became a good reader, a good arithmetician and accountant, and learned, at least in a certain rough way, the elements of Latin; without, however, any kindlings of desire after further attainments in the higher learning. His thoughts were still all outward, and his highest ambition and declared resolution to be a country farmer, like the fathers of most of his school companions and friends. And yet, even then, a touch of deeper feeling would now and then betray itself, which revealed the hidden fire that slumbered within. A touching instance of this I very vividly remember. The population of a dovecot which he owned as his special property, had become redundant, and the decree had gone forth from the higher powers that some of his favourites should fall a sacrifice to the public good. Yielding reluctant to the stern necessity, he undertook himself the office of executioner, which he deemed would be more mercifully discharged by his own hand than by any other; and planting himself carabine in hand at the corner of a wall at a little distance, took his aim resolutely but tremblingly at one of the devoted flock perched on the ridge of the house, between him and the sky. The shot missed its mark, but unhappily only partially. The poor bird was sorely wounded in the foot, but not killed; and gathering up the broken and bleeding limb beneath its wing, stood on the other, silent and motionless, a spectacle of agony. Instantly his heart smote him for the deed he had done; he was now, to his own sense, no more the executioner, but the cruel murderer; and he stood there rooted to the spot for hours together, as in bitter penance, gazing up with streaming eyes to the hapless victim, which seemed in its turn to look down reproachfully upon him. The whole scene, which is distinctly before me now, might almost have reminded one of

Rispah, the daughter of Aiah, in her long watch beside the bodies of her slaughtered sons, "when she took sackcloth and spread it for her on the rock, from the beginning of harvest, until water dropped upon them out of heaven." A circumstance, however, which now transpired, changed at once the whole course of his thoughts, and opened a new, and, as the event proved, a most momentous chapter in his life. A maternal uncle, a respected lawyer in Aberdeen, who happened to visit us at this time, not approving of the farming project, kindly invited William, then in his thirteenth year, to spend a winter with him, and take advantage of the higher training of the grammar-school of that city, then at the very height of its fame, under the distinguished rectorship of the Rev. Dr. James Melvin, then well known within his own sphere, but since his death far more widely, as one of the first classical scholars of his day, and, more perhaps than any other man, the reviver in modern times of exact scholarship, and especially of Latin scholarship, in Scotland.

My brother at once felt the fascination of the place and of the man, and caught the breath of a new existence, in which all his old dreams of farming and of a country life vanished out of sight. He fought his way steadily up the class till he reached the genial and exhilarating air of the highest "faction," and closed the session as one of the rector's best and most trusted scholars. When he returned home, even after the interval of a college session, his talk was still of Melvin and of the grammar-school, and was of such an enthusiastic kind as to kindle in me an irrepressible longing to explore the same Eldorado of golden knowledge and pure classic lore. The effects of the mental discipline thus acquired were lasting, and had an important influence on the whole course of his future life, forming in him once for all those habits of rigid accuracy, thorough work, and conscientious regard for rule and law which ever afterwards distinguished him; while at the same time awakening and training that remarkable faculty for the study of language which stood him in such good stead in the missionary labours of later years. From the school he passed to the University, standing fifth on the list of bursars or open scholars in Marischal College, from among more than a hundred competitors; and after two successive sessions, in which he obtained honourable distinction in all his classes, returned home in the spring of 1831, having completed, as was then thought, his education and full preparation for the work of his life. The nature of that work he had already chosen. His residence with his uncle at Aberdeen had had naturally enough the same effect upon him as the companionship of farmers' sons at the Kilsyth parish school, and he was now accordingly as decidedly set on the profession of the law as before on a country life. His father, who had earnestly desired his dedication to the Christian ministry, gave his reluctant consent, and a few months afterwards he was settled with his uncle, Mr. Alexander Burns, a writer to the signet in Edinburgh, with the view of being bound as an apprentice, so soon as the necessary certificates from his college professors could be obtained.

But "man proposeth, God disposeth." "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." God had "girded" him for a far higher and nobler work than that which he had chosen for himself, though as yet "he did not know Him." Before all the certificates had arrived, and while yet the last of them was impatiently waited for, a change had taken place in the spirit of his mind, which translated him at once as into a new world and gave a new direction to his whole after-life. The extant memorials of the memorable event are not abundant, but explicit and deeply interesting. "While William was at Aberdeen," writes an elder sister, "a great change had come over our eldest sister, who from a life of gaiety in Edinburgh during two winters, was turned most decidedly with her face Zionwards, and left Edinburgh for ever. She returned to our quiet manse, desiring, whatever others did, that she might serve the Lord; and from this service she never drew back, but her path was as the shining light shining more and more until the perfect day—at Pesth, 18th February, 1865—when she passed into glory. I think the year 1831 was a year of grace in our family. I remember we began a practice of reading aloud between dinner and tea some religious book. Bridges on the 119*th Psalm* was with our sister a special favourite, and means of grace. On these occasions dear William, to our sorrow, without saying a word always slipped out, and he was to our view the least likely subject of grace in the family. He always vehemently rejected the idea of being a minister, and said he wished to be a lawyer, because he 'saw lawyers rich and with fine houses.' Oh! what a contrast his after-life was to this! for one more conformed to his Saviour, in self-denial and in voluntary poverty, the world has never seen—at least one who was all this, without false asceticism or self-righteous pride.

"When, in this spirit, William went to Edinburgh to be bound apprentice to our uncle A. with the view of being a W.S., we mourned over him as one going to be 'bound' to the world; and this view seemed to have come over his own mind when he found the different kind of society he was thrown into, from what he left behind in the manse. A joint letter we wrote him, to which he often afterwards referred as one of the chief means of awakening him, has passed from my mind, and a single sentence quoted from it in a letter of his which still remains is all that is left. The first dawn of hope regarding him is to be found in a letter of date 5th

December, 1831, in which the following for him remarkable words occur, 'I am extremely obliged to you for your excellent letter, also to papa, and I look forward to our correspondence as a thing that shall afford me great pleasure when I am fairly settled away from that *dear* home where I have enjoyed so many *happy* days, and where in all likelihood I shall never be resident again. I wish you would recommend me to, or send me some good religious reading.' This request astonished us, and I think we sent him Boston's *Fourfold State.* Very soon after this he suddenly and unexpectedly walked in one evening into the dining-room at the old manse, with a graver look than was his wont; and in answer to our mother's exclamation, 'Oh! Willie, where have you come from?' his answer was gravely, 'From Edinburgh.' 'How did you come?' 'I walked' [a distance of 36 miles]. There was then a silence, and standing on the hearth-rug, with his back to the fire, he said, 'What would you think, mamma, if I should be a minister after all?' His countenance showed that he was speaking in earnest, and he then told openly how the Lord had arrested him, and that he had no rest in his spirit till he should come home and obtain his parents' consent to relinquish the law and give himself to the service of Jesus in the ministry of the gospel. The inner history of this wonderful change you have in his own diary—this is as I *saw* it; and far distant as is the day, I remember it vividly, and my feeling was that I was standing in the presence of a miracle. I could not contain my feelings, but rushed along the long passage which led to our father's study, and shutting the door threw myself on my knees and wept. After being a short time at home, he returned to Edinburgh with our parents' joyful consent to his being what they had long wished and prayed for—a minister of the everlasting gospel. By a singular providence he was free to do so. He had not been bound apprentice, owing to a delay in the arrival of one of his certificates of attendance at college; and it was during this interval that the whole current of his life was changed. It may be right to add that William had been all along, so far as ever known to me, perfectly free from all *outward vice.* I never knew of an act of duplicity or a bad word. This I think is important to be mentioned, as from his deep views of sin, he during all the course of his spiritual life spoke of himself in such terms of self-loathing, that those unacquainted with the facts might naturally suppose that he had been turned to God from a life of open sin, as indeed is broadly hinted in an Aberdeen document recently given to the world."[1]

Such was the event so far as it could be seen from the outside, even by those who stood the nearest to it. Happily we have another and still more authentic record of it from his own hand—a solemn deposition as before God, in regard to a sacred secret, over which before man he ever cast the veil of a deep and reverent reserve. It was drawn forth by a sudden gush of reminiscence, when, ten years afterwards, and after his own new life had become the germ of similar life to thousands of other souls, he unexpectedly found himself, in the course of a solitary evening walk, in the midst of those scenes which were linked to him with such infinite and deathless memories—

"*Edin.*, *Tuesday*, *Nov.* 16, 1841.—To-day I was chiefly occupied, as far as business is concerned, in preparing for the press the letters I sent some time ago to the Greenside Place school. In taking the air I walked over scenes which were indeed fitted to speak aloud of mercy to my favoured soul. I walked along York Place, and looked up to the windows of the room (No. 41, west side, upper flat) where, when reading Pike's *Early Piety* on a Sabbath afternoon, I think about the middle of December, 1831, an arrow from the quiver of the King of Zion was shot by his Almighty sovereign hand through my heart, though it was hard enough to resist all inferior means of salvation. Who can understand the feelings with which I again revisited the spot! Alas! the windows in the roof above met my eye, as the place where a few months afterwards (in 1832) poor Uncle Alexander died in one day of cholera! Oh! what a contrast between the scenes of mercy and judgment exhibited by God in places so near each other! From this I walked down and revisited my old lodgings, No. 69 Broughton Place, where my earliest days as a child of grace were spent, and where first the Spirit of God shone with full light upon the glory of Jesus as a Saviour for such as I was. This was, I think, about the 7th of January, 1832. Although it was then, I remember, that the light of God first shone fully and transportingly on his word, and into my heart, I was never from the beginning, three weeks before, in utter darkness, but felt that God had been always willing to save me, that I was a self-murderer, and that now he was in his own *sovereignty* touching my heart and drawing me to himself for his own glory; and again, though about the time mentioned, I remember to have beheld transporting wonders in God's law, yet my peace following on this was far different indeed from a settled quiet frame of mind. I had many fears and many awful struggles with sin and Satan, and many sleepless nights of mingling joy and fear, and faith and hope, and love. Ebenezer! Halleluiah! Halleluiah! Amen.

---

[1] It may be of more importance for me to state that my own thorough belief is in entire accordance with that here expressed. As a brother nearly of the same age, I had been constantly with him and shared his inmost thoughts; and I always understood from him that he had begun to tread those paths of folly which often lead to open sin, but never passed over the verge of the precipice. On the contrary, he seemed to regard it as a singular mercy from the Lord, that the effectual call of grace had come just in time to save him from a ruin otherwise, as it seemed to him, inevitable.

"*Wednesday.*—Yesterday morning I breakfasted with Mr. Bruce, and this morning with Mr. Brown (C. J. B.); on both occasions we had interesting conversations. Mr. Bruce seemed pleased to be reminded of old events, and promised to give me the dates of several sermons which I was benefited by when preached. The means by which my change of heart was brought about were these, I think—Mr. Bruce's preaching, which engaged me much, and the fear of sudden death from the approach of cholera, were preparatory. A letter from my sisters at home, in which they spoke in a single sentence of going as pilgrims to Zion, and leaving me behind, proved a word in season and touched my natural feelings very deeply; for when sin had rendered me dead to every other feeling, I could not think of my Christian parents, and my godly home with all its sweet and solemn privileges, without an awful conflict of soul at the thought of parting with them for ever. I could think of parting with Christ, for I knew him not—alas! do I yet know him?—but to part with them was too much for me to bear. In this way the way was prepared, but as yet I am fully conscious that my heart was spiritually dead. However the set time came. I sat down, with solemn impressions arising from the causes now mentioned, to read a part of Pike's *Early Piety*, which my dear father had given me at leaving home; (Ah! little did he know what use God was to make of it, little did the author of that solemn treatise know one of the purposes for which he wrote it;) and in one moment, while gazing on a solemn passage in it, my inmost soul was in one instant pierced as with a dart. God had apprehended me. I felt the conviction of my lost estate rushing through me with resistless power; I left the room and retired to a bedroom, there to pour out my heart for the first time with many tears in a genuine heart-rending cry for mercy. From the first moment of this wonderful experience I had the inspiring hope of being saved by a sovereign and infinitely gracious God; and in the same instant almost I felt that I *must* leave my present occupation, and devote myself to Jesus in the ministry of that glorious gospel by which I had been saved. From that day to this, blessed be Jehovah, I have been conscious more or less deeply of the possession of a *new* and holy principle, leading me to live by the faith of Jesus to the glory of God, and in the communion of the Holy Ghost. Salvation unto our God, who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb!"

The only other extant memorial of this eventful time is contained in the following letter to his sisters, written soon after his unexpected visit to Kilsyth, and which is the first surviving blossom of the new life that had dawned upon him:—

"*Edinburgh, February 20th*, 1832.—MY DEAR SISTERS,— . . . . I feel it often a great encouragement to me to persevere in that *life* upon which I have entered, that I do not *make for heaven alone;* but though there be few that find 'the strait gate' and the 'narrow way,' yet that my nearest and *dearest* friends upon earth are my fellow-pilgrims to the 'heavenly Canaan.' Let us encourage and exhort one another in following and *trusting* in the *Lamb* who was slain, and who now intercedes for all who trust in him, at the right hand of the Father. I have been apt, as is I believe the case with many young Christians, to make my safety depend upon my feelings, and consequently to feel miserable when not engaged in religious exercises, and to despise in some degree the ordinary business of life; but I have for some time past been coming to juster and more stable views. I had another conversation with Mr. Bruce about a week ago; I was as much as on the former occasion delighted with him, and I trust edified. He had two admirable discourses last Sabbath (yesterday), the one a lecture from the 7th and 8th verses of the 6th of Matthew, and the other from Ephesians, 3d chapter and 12th verse, 'In whom we have boldness,' &c. They were both very much suited to my state, and I trust I was much benefited by them. . . . . Mr. Moody and I are on the most intimate terms; he is one of the few that *live near* to God. . . .

"If the Lord spare us all, I look forward to the happiest meeting that ever we have had. We are now, my dearest sisters, linked together by a new tie, being members of the same *body*, and the children of the Almighty, our Father in heaven: but till then let us pray daily to Him for *one another*, and seek a nearer communion with Him to whom we have access with *confidence* by the blood of Jesus. Let not the question be with us, 'How near must we be to him in order to insure our safety?' but how much *communion can* we possibly attain to while here on earth. This is not our home, 'for we are *dead*, and our *life* is hid with

Christ in God.' 'When He who is our *life* shall appear, then shall we also appear with *Him* in glory.' What a hope is this, That *our* eyes shall see Him, and that we shall dwell with Him for ever and ever! He now makes intercession for us at the Father's right hand. May *we* be 'kept by the POWER of God through faith unto salvation.' Let us have but *one* object in view, the kingdom of heaven, and all other *necessary* things shall be added unto us. All things shall work together for the *eternal* good of them that love God, and we must *wait* upon the Lord that he may give us this love. There is no object in this world, the contemplation of which is an adequate employment for that immortal and divine principle in us—'the soul,' except the character of the 'Lord of Hosts;' with the contemplation of which, although we were to devote our entire lives, yet would we be compelled to exclaim, 'Thou art past finding out;' and this is the God to whom *we* approach with so little humility and contrition of soul. How wonderful that he should not only listen to *us* when we call on Him, but condescend to work in us by his Holy Spirit exciting us to draw near unto Him. We ought to strive to bring our fellow-creatures to a knowledge of their state, and of the mercy that is freely offered them: it is truly an awful thought, that any one to whom the gospel is proclaimed should go down to that lake *that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever.* People are apt to think themselves *independent* creatures, and that none has a right to their services; but if we do not take *God's* mercy in Christ Jesus, we must take his *wrath.* I pity most of all those whom we call *decent* people, who, although they will hardly believe it, are in as unsafe a state as the openly profligate, as they do not build on Christ as the foundation. . . . The cholera is going on here though slowly, and I hope we may all be mercifully spared; but let us endeavour to say from the heart, 'The will of the Lord be done.' I have a letter to —— ready, which I expect to have an opportunity of forwarding this week. Let us pray earnestly for him, that the Lord would open his heart to the truth; that we may go *all on together* to that blessed country to which Christ has purchased an admittance for all who trust in and follow Him. I cannot tell you *all* nor *any* of my thoughts on paper, but wait for a meeting with you, if the Lord will. Till then farewell.—I remain, my dearest sisters, your truly affectionate brother,—WM. C. BURNS."

He remained still for a short time in the office of his uncle, who had already formed an exalted estimate of his ability and aptitude for business, and of his prospects of future success, and who parted from him with unfeigned regret.

In the course of the summer he returned to Kilsyth, and by the beginning of November he was once more in Aberdeen, to resume the broken thread of his studies, with a view to the ministry of the Church of Scotland.

CHAPTER II

1832–1839.

PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY.

My brother's remaining years of study at Aberdeen present nothing particularly worthy of record, except a visibly heightened tone of earnestness and energy in all his work, due to the higher motives and principles which now inspired him. A true Christian, he became more than ever an earnest student. Having learned to be faithful in that which is much, he became faithful as never before in that which is least. The result was seen in the higher place taken by him in all his classes, and in the University distinctions which began more than ever to crowd upon him. In his third year he was awarded the first place of honour in the senior mathematical class, and in the next following session he gained by public competition, along with another who was bracketted with him, the mathematical scholarship, then and for long afterwards the highest attainable distinction in the University;

while in all the other branches of study he held a distinguished place. In other and higher matters, meanwhile, he held on his constant way—not of course in a path of unclouded sunshine and uninterrupted progress, but consistently and steadfastly. The fresh and blessed experience which had attended his entrance on the spiritual life had indeed passed away, and been succeeded by an ebb of feeling over which he bitterly mourned; but the holy stream, fed by an inexhaustible spring, was never dried up, or ceased to flow in a strong and steady current. His religion, indeed, at this time was rather calm, serious, strict, and resolutely conscientious, than specially ardent and exalted; characterized rather by unflinching decision and strength of principle, than by any peculiar elevation of feeling or depth of spiritual experience. His life was more of the usual type, and moved more in the customary channels of Christian profession and obedience, than in after-years. There seems even to have been in him a certain tinge of the artificial and the legal—a tendency not uncommon with young disciples when called openly to confess Christ in the presence of those who have known them before in the days of their ignorance, to maintain a higher standard of outward profession and observance than is fully sustained by the state of the heart within. Of this he bitterly accuses himself in his first letter to his sister after his return to Aberdeen, and which is the only surviving fragment of his correspondence belonging to this period of his life:

Aberdeen, Friday, Nov. 16, 1832.—. . . "In regard to my own state of mind, I can say little that is pleasing. When I came here my spiritual state was very low, but I hoped that the necessity which I knew there was of my walking carefully would, by God's blessing, have had a beneficial effect, making me seek nearness to Him and strength for all my emergencies; but I lament to say, I have been disappointed. During the first few days after my arrival, I am sensible of having been guilty of much hypocrisy, striving to make it appear that I was indeed converted, while I felt myself to be far from God, and acting I fear rather for the upholding of my own reputation than with a view to the glory of God. I might say much on this subject, but feel at this moment that although my entering on it is calculated to be beneficial to me, in bringing it more immediately before my own mind, and calling forth your earnest prayers in my behalf; yet the very feeling of having expressed my mind upon this subject may prove a snare to me, leading me to suppose that I have retraced my steps to the cross of Christ, while I remain in reality unwilling to become His *wholly* and His *only*. May the Lord in His great mercy teach me my real character, and lead me to some just conception of His perfect holiness and hatred of sin, that I may prize as I ought that salvation which He has provided, and be made to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus! The counsel and sympathy of dear friends are then especially effective when they are absent; for as we delight to think of again meeting after being for a time separated, our views are directed to that blessed abode where alone there is a security of our dwelling in sweet and uninterrupted communion."

The state of mind thus expressed will not be difficult of comprehension to any who, like him, after a spiritual crisis of more than usual decisiveness, have descended all at once to the common level of ordinary practical life. Clearly the views and convictions which then opened on his soul remained unchanged, but the fresh impressions and strong emotions which had given life and force to them had for the moment passed away. He still thought as justly, but he felt less intensely, and therefore moved and acted less buoyantly. He was faint, but he was still pursuing the same high end, and held his face unswervingly in the same direction. They who thus wait on the Lord, even though they may for a season faint and be weary, shall renew their strength. Though like the moulting bird they may droop as if ready to die, a new life will soon stir within them, and bear them upwards as on eagles' wings. Even in the dead calm and when the loose sails hang idly down, let us remember still the haven whither we are going, and turn our eyes ever wistfully thither, and the heavenly gales will surely soon return. How eminently this was so in the case of the subject of this memoir we shall in the sequel see. Even now the declension over which he mourned was more apparent than real—rather the mere transition from the flush of the morning to the light of common day, than any actual retrogression or even obscuration of the Sun. Meanwhile the light that was in him, dim and feeble as it seemed to himself, was not darkened, and could not be hid from others. "My mind," says Dr. Murray Mitchell, an old class-fellow, and now missionary of the Free Church of Scotland at Calcutta, "goes back to Aberdeen, and 1829, or rather November, 1828, when I first became acquainted with your brother. We were class-fellows, at school and college, for three years. He then discontinued attending college for a year, with the intention I think of giving himself to the study of law. When he returned to Aberdeen he was an altered man. He came back full of holy earnestness, having in the meantime sustained the greatest revolution of which the spirit of man is susceptible, and seeking now every opportunity to converse with his old companions regarding Christ and his salvation." With this statement my own recollections of this period entirely accord. It was a time with him, I think, of steady, though not of marked or conspicuous progress. He was earnest and decided in his Christian profession beyond the standard of most, but still according to the ordinary style of the Christians of that time; nor had that overmastering sense of eternal things and of the infinite worth of souls, which at an after period carried him beyond all the barriers of conventional rule, and could be bound by no restraints but the clear and eternal laws of God, yet manifested itself.

Taking his degree with honourable distinction in 1834, he proceeded in the winter of that year to the University of Glasgow, with the view of prosecuting his further studies for the ministry there. The intellectual life of that ancient and famed seat of learning was in those days, so far at least as the public teaching was concerned, rather more conspicuous in the literary than in the theological department. The revered professor of divinity, Dr. Stevenson Macgill, had by that time fallen into the "sere and yellow leaf," and no longer exercised that effective influence over the minds of his pupils which he had done in earlier years. The air of the church history class was indescribably slumbrous, and reminded one now of Spenser's Cave of Morpheus and now of Bunyan's Enchanted Ground; while our Hebrew studies were superintended by a professor of much intelligence certainly, but who knew almost nothing of Hebrew, and opened his course rather significantly by an elaborate refutation of the vowel-points. In the literary and philosophical departments again all was life and energy; and there was altogether, I think, about the place more of a true academic spirit than existed at that time anywhere else in Scotland. In the Greek class-room, especially, under the most fascinating and eloquent of teachers, Sir Daniel K. Sandford, there was an element of high enthusiasm which no one then at the University can have forgotten, and of which old pupils still speak with a rapture that almost looks like extravagance. The very music of his voice as he read the sounding lines of Homer, apart even from the brilliant translation and the rich feast of illustrative commentary and apt quotation, was a thing to go and hear. Within this charmed circle my brother was soon drawn, and supplemented by two successive sessions in Sandford's senior class the more elementary studies of his undergraduate course. At the same time the more proper work of the divinity hall was not neglected. If there was little life in the class-room there was great life in the library, and around it. There were men at the hall at that time who were not likely to suffer any society of which they were members to sink into stagnation and ennui—such as James Halley, James Hamilton, William Arnot, Norman Macleod, with others of kindred spirit, though less widely known. No doubt, however, the systematic study of scientific theology must have suffered greatly from the want of the due direction and stimulus. What was done in the way of special lines of reading, in connection with a class exercise or a University prize theme, was rather occasional and spasmodic, than methodical and sustained. Such incidental calls, however, to studious application my brother promptly obeyed, and improved most strenuously. Returning from Aberdeen about the middle of April, after completing my own undergraduate course, I found him still in his rooms in Glasgow, working at the last of a long series of prize essays on Old Testament subjects for the Hebrew class, in which he had maintained a strenuous competition with another student throughout the entire winter; and either in this or in a subsequent session he devoted much thought and labour to an essay on the characteristics of Hellenistic Greek for a University medal, which he was fortunate enough to obtain. Altogether it quite struck me, that the atmosphere of student life in which he was now living was decidedly of a more living and stimulating kind than that which I had left behind. In the higher matters of the spirit it undoubtedly was so. Not only was there a higher tone of religious earnestness among the better part of the students generally, but there were among them individual instances of eminent devotedness and rare elevation of character, which could not fail to tell with quickening effect on others, and especially on one whom divine grace had made so susceptible to such impressions. Amongst these, besides James Hamilton, I would particularly mention the names of James Denniston, a fellow-student of his own in the divinity hall, and Charles Birrel, then an undergraduate in the University, and since an eminent minister of the Baptist communion in England. With these, and with other junior students whom in after-years he gathered more and more around him, he spent many hallowed hours of sweet communion in conference and in prayer, at once provoking and himself provoked to love and unto good works. Other influences there were working towards the same result, and which contributed to render this period an era in his spiritual progress, two of which I would especially commemorate. The one was the peculiar and powerful ministry of the Rev. John Duncan, then of Milton Church, Glasgow, and subsequently professor of oriental languages in the New College, Edinburgh, which during the two last years of his residence took a more and more fast hold of him, and opened to him deeper views of divine truth and more solemn aspects of the Christian calling and discipleship than he had known before. "One soweth and another reapeth;" one forges the weapon of steel, another gives it its last tempering and its keen sharp edge. And so it was ordered of God that this singular instrument of his grace, who at the beginning and further progress of his spiritual course had been helped onward by other able ministers of the word, should receive his last touch of preparation for his great work from that scribe well instructed in the kingdom of God.[1] Certainly at least it seems to me, in the retrospect of those days, as if every Sabbath spent by him in Milton Church had been as a day in Patmos, and every sermon almost as an opening of the gate of heaven. The other influence was that of the Students'

---

[1] Besides Dr. Bruce, he had attended and much valued the ministry successively of Dr. John Murray, of the North Church, Aberdeen, Dr. Nathaniel Paterson, of St. Andrew's Church, and Dr. John Forbes, of St. Paul's Church, Glasgow.

Missionary Society in the University of Glasgow, of which he was throughout an active and zealous, and latterly a leading and influential member. That was a sort of focus and rallying point of everything that was most earnest and Christian both in the divinity hall and in the undergraduate classes of the University; drew good men together, and placed the weak side by side with the strong; brought home to us by essay or discussion, or through the well-worn volumes of our library, the shining examples of missionary faith and heroism —the Martyns and Brainerds of the past, the Marshmans and Duffs of the present—till our hearts burned within us, and we longed to go forth and mix ourselves with life, in the great battle that was going on in the church and in the world around. Here my brother was ever peculiarly at home, and breathed an element which was to him more than any other congenial and inspiring. It was here, and especially while listening to the weighty and earnest words of a missionary about to sail for China,[1] that he first rose to the full idea of that entire and absolute consecration of his whole being and life to the service of Christ, which in his subsequent ministry so remarkably distinguished him, as well as formed his first definite purpose of devoting himself to the missionary field.

Almost the only written memorials of this period are contained in a brief correspondence with one of those sisters who stood, as we have seen, in so close a relation to the beginning of his spiritual life; but these will be read with interest, both as illustrating some of the statements now made, and as marking generally the growing earnestness and solemnity of his views and feelings. Most of them are without date, except that of the day of the week; but I arrange them as far as possible chronologically, as they seem to me by internal indications to date themselves. The first was written, as the date shows, in the first year of his residence in Glasgow. The rest probably all belong to the last:—

---

[1] Dr. James Kalley, who was however prevented by the state of his health from fulfilling his purpose.

"DEAR JANE,—The accompanying packet arrived a few days ago from Paisley. Expecting it some time previously, I had prepared a few lines for you, to accompany it; but I waited in vain—and this among other causes has prevented me from sooner writing you. I am obliged to do so at present very hurriedly, but perhaps the principal interest of anything I might say would be owing to its coming from a brother who remembers you and a brother *at home;*[1] and the merest note may serve this purpose.

"Dr. Macgill, after an illness that confined him nearly four weeks, resumed his labours a few days ago, and is now proceeding with all the vigour that is compatible with advanced age and great weakness. But we are not just dependent on his lectures for a profitable employment of our time, and the loss we sustained by his temporary absence is not so material as a stranger might imagine. I am attending, besides Dr. Macgill, the professor of Hebrew Dr. Fleming, an interesting and excellent teacher. And in addition to this, I am studying French under Dr. Gerlach of the High-school. I should consider him a very admirable teacher, and I hope I am making some progress under him. . . . .

"*Glasgow, December 24th*, 1834."

"MY DEAR JANE,—I am sorry, as usual, to be obliged to despatch the basket in so great a hurry as to prevent me answering as I could have wished your very pleasing note. It is indeed hard to be truly serious and interesting, while it is easy to be morose and dull, in the service of God: yet still we must not desist from an ardent pursuit of our high and holy calling, because of the difficulties which, from an utterly depraved heart and blinded understanding, it is encompassed with. Let us in this as in all things commit in humble but earnest faith our way to the Lord, and he *will* direct our steps—not thinking on the one hand that we can have too deep an impression of the value of immortal souls and the danger in which we all naturally are, if it is counterbalanced on the other by a view of the glorious remedy, and the fulness and certainty of the Christian's inheritance. O that we might live nearer to God, and then indeed if our manner may appear for a little less natural, it will become at length *naturally* serious and heavenly! I have had a very dull and unfruitful week, have been conscious of more heart-atheism than I remember of feeling, but am now, I trust, desiring in some measure that this discovery of my utter depravity may by God's sovereign and precious grace be blessed to make me more humble and more grateful to the adorable Redeemer, who for such vile creatures as we descended so infinitely low and bore so much.

---

[1] His sister was then in London.

"I think highly of your scheme of Sabbath teaching, and hope that you will be greatly honoured and supported in it. Your affectionate brother,—WM. C. BURNS.

"*Rothesay*, *Thursday*. MY DEAR JANE,—I have from various causes delayed till this time writing home, in expectation, before ——'s arrival, of every day seeing some of you; and since then, waiting the opportunity of his return home. And now when the time has arrived, I am disappointed to find that, owing partly to other engagements in the evening, and partly to a doubt whether or not —— would go to-morrow morning, I must take to my desk when I should retire to rest. I cannot however think of allowing him to go without some little supplement to the intelligence which I have no doubt he will retail among you for days to come.

"I have been enjoying Rothesay, since I saw you, in an unusual degree, the weather being so fine, and my health, in the great kindness of God, unimpaired. Nor can I reckon among the least of the present sources of pleasure the duties in which of course my time is a good deal occupied. I have an interesting little charge here, and one which I think I have increasing cause to feel at once responsible and engaging. I have this season the privilege, obtained by request from Mr. ——, of joining with my pupils in the morning exercise of reading a portion of Scripture and prayer, which gives a new facility for bringing to bear on their minds and hearts the religious influence which God may enable me to employ, and accustoms them by practice to a duty which, imperative and fundamental as it is, they are unfortunately not yet otherwise acquainted with. I have many pleasing tokens, had I time to enter into particulars, of such an interest in all my pupils in those truths which must decide their eternity, as hang one between hope and fear on their account, and demand on my part a diligence and prayerfulness which, now that I record this truth before me, I find, more than ever, I grievously want. O that I had grace to occupy my present little talent, instead of looking forward to a larger sphere, for when may I expect to be faithful if not now, and may I not here be privileged in Jehovah's infinite loving-kindness, if ever I shall be so honoured, to tend the lambs of the fold of Jesus? it is unbelief and not faith, I find, that discourages the ambition. Let us provoke one another, my dear sister, to love and to good works; let us be steadfast in our efforts and instant in our prayers, and never forget, for *your* encouragement in the service of our Divine Master, that if I have ever yet known the precious faith of God's elect, it was a letter from you and Margaret, in which I remember you spoke of being 'pilgrims to a better country,' that was first blessed to rouse me from the unconcern of an ungodly state.

"I wrote —— some time ago and have had a letter in reply. His circumstances appear, from his account, in many respects very favourable for his improvement.

"—— appears to have enjoyed his short stay with me exceedingly, and we have been very happy together. He is a boy of very warm heart, solid and in the main thoughtful; a hopeful subject of grace he appears to me when I contrast his character and impressions of truth, as far as I can see these, with my own at a similar age. May the Lord make him his own, and prepare him, if it be his holy will, for important service in the advancement of his cause!

"We have been thinking of you in the enjoyment of your New Testament feast. In the strength of this food may you have grace to go many days. And now farewell, my dear Jane, and give my filial and brotherly regards to all at home and at Croy. Ever yours,—WM. C. BURNS.

"MY DEAR JANE,—I would not write you so paltry a note, were it not that writing to —— has exhausted my time, and I cannot let another opportunity pass without thanking you for your kind and interesting letter, which I have not yet acknowledged; and expressing my desire that your mid-day period of solemn retirement may be specially regarded of the Lord, and that you may obtain new and remarkable communications of the Holy Spirit in all his vivifying and comforting power. I enjoyed my late visit very much, though, had we been alone, it might have been spent in closer intercourse on the things of the Spirit, and in special approaches to the throne of divine grace, and thus have been rendered more stimulating to us all. Mr. Denniston, I hope, will see you on Friday, and I hope that, through the presence of the Lord, his parting visit may be eminently blessed to your growth in the excellent knowledge of Christ.

"I am asking, though alas! with little becoming solicitude, whether the present is to be added to the list of our almost Christless sacraments. Would that the Lord would pour out on us the Spirit as in former days, and bring his saints into close and ravishing fellowship with himself! 'Whither is our beloved gone?' 'Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?' 'Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?'

"In earnest expectation of his coming, let us wait day and night, and he will at last arrive to our infinite amazement and eternal rejoicing.

"My love in Christ Jesus to dear Charlotte, and believe me, your affectionate brother,—WM. C. BURNS.

"*Wednesday* 17*th*, 1838.—MY DEAR JANE,—I would have sent the basket sooner, but could not find the time necessary for despatching it; and I hope that we shall get it returned not later than this day week.

"None of us have been able to get out to Paisley as yet, but I heard of them yesterday. They are all, it would seem, well, with the exception of Aunt ——, who I hear is confined to bed with cold, and is still troubled with her arm, which does not seem to mend rapidly. I paid a most delightful visit to Uncle Islay's the other evening, when Mr. ——, their new minister, was there, and expounded in a manner remarkably interesting and impressive. He seems indeed a very uncommon Christian, and has made me feel in some degree my own miserable ignorance in the excellent knowledge of the Son of God. O that I might know *Him*, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death! God forbid that we should glory save in the *Cross* of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to us, and we to the world! I trust, my dear sister, that you are obtaining some advancement in the knowledge of your own vileness and misery, and of the glorious righteousness and atonement of Emmanuel, our elder brother. Of such precious knowledge I can say little, but I would desire, I trust by the grace of the Holy Spirit, to fix the eye continually on Jesus, who is the finisher as well as the author of faith, and who will, as he is the faithful God, perfect for his own glory that which concerneth us. I am approaching, as you know, an era of my history, if we except the time of conversion, the most important that can occur to a human being in this world—soon must I offer myself, miserable as I am, to the Church of God as a candidate for the work of an evangelist; and still more, that Church must decide, so great is the honour I have in prospect, whether in this land or among the perishing heathen it shall be my lot to preach to sinners the unsearchable riches of Christ crucified. In the meantime, O pray for me, and our dear brother ——, as I now again resolve to pray for you, that, in our present respective spheres, we may be always living epistles of Christ, that may be known and read of all men, and be even now the means, in the hand of the Spirit of the Lord, of converting sinners and edifying believers! Especially for our dear brother —— let us plead unitedly, that he may be speedily given to the Church of God, and thus preserved safe unto the heavenly kingdom from those sins and snares of youth which have drowned so many in destruction and perdition!

"We had the privilege of being lately addressed in our missionary society by Dr. Kalley of Kilmarnock, 'a good physician,' who is leaving his present practice, which I understand is excellent, to consecrate his medical skill to the promotion of the cause of Christ in China, a channel which seems at present almost the only one open among that benighted people, so puffed up by their imagined knowledge in almost every branch of science and religion. Though a member of our own church, he goes out supported by the London Missionary Society, as the Committee of the General Assembly did not judge it expedient to extend the field of their operations farther east than India. He appears a most superior man, calm, but resolved and eager; and being one who I am informed was converted some years ago from a life of vanity, he seems, especially in prayer, to have obtained peculiarly deep views of man's sin, and of the glorious grace of God. But I am forced abruptly to conclude, and am, I trust, your affectionate brother in Christ,—WM. C. BURNS."

It was with such views, longings, and deep preparation of heart that he approached the period of his public dedication to the service of Christ in the gospel of his grace. The more secret exercises of his soul, in the immediate prospect of that event, may be still further gathered from the following jottings in a diary which he began at this time, and continued, with occasional interruptions, until the year 1853:—

"*September* 19*th*, 1838.—Here, if God spare my life, I intend to record from time to time the most memorable incidents in my life and in the experience of my heart before God, my Judge. Grant me, O my covenant God and Father in Christ Jesus! that it may be, through the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit within me, a faithful copy of the truth; and that I may be enabled to look on its contents with those judgments and feelings which a sight of the unerring record of thy book of remembrance will produce within my soul in the day of the Lord Jesus. Amen. This day I had the great pleasure and profit of meeting at breakfast in his lodgings, Mr. Davidson of the Training School, Inverness, a singularly advanced and amiable Christian, whose labours have been remarkably honoured of the Lord in the island of Coll, and for the last twenty years in his present situation. I have done very little to-day, but I have seen, I trust, through the light of the Spirit, that I am especially deficient in the knowledge of the *love* of Christ, and am mournfully defective even in attempting to set this before the unconverted. Yet surely this is *the* truth, the exhibition of which is of all most fitted to beget the confidence of an appropriating faith, and to manifest the glory of the Lord's justice in visiting with a more awful damnation those who perish with Christ in their offer. O Lord! teach *thou* me to grow daily and hourly in the apprehension of thy unspeakable and sovereign love to me, a miserable sinner, that I may be constrained out of the abundance of an overflowing heart, continually to commend thee to others who need thy love as much as I, and deserve it just as little!

"21*st.* These two days have been spent much as usual, and with nothing very remarkable, except that, which is most extraordinary because most uniform, when we notice it least, the continued and unchanging love of God in my preservation and support under an hourly increasing load of hell-kindling guilt. How needful to be daily plunged anew under the crimson tide of Emmanuel's blood, that I may walk in the light as God is in the light! I have studied Hebrew chiefly to-day, which Mr. Duncan teaches with great skill and activity. Wm. M'D——'s and W——'s lessons take a long time at present. I saw Mr ——'s brother, a spirit-seller in Calton, in bed; conversed and prayed with him. He seemed very ignorant of sin. May the Spirit convince him! None other can awaken truly either him or any other. The work of grace is indeed *God's* from beginning to end, and all the glory will be his. To his blessed name be praise, through Christ Jesus. Amen.

"23*d*, *Sabbath.*—This morning rose at 20 minutes to 7 and met my young men's class from 8 to 9. The attendance is increasing, and the prospect interesting. Mr. Duncan lectured in the forenoon on James ii. 12. Afternoon I addressed Mr. Patrick's little flock in St. Enoch's School, from John iii. 14, 15; and may well learn several important lessons from my experience. Last time I addressed the same meeting, a fortnight ago, I had made *mere mental* preparation, but, as I thought, was in some degree supported, and spoke with some force and fulness from Hebrews x. 19–22. Encouraged by this imagined success, I was content with a similar preparation to-day; and if the former case encouraged presumption, this does not less favour despondency. I felt little alive to the subject, my faith almost failed, and I was left devoid of conscious love to Christ and compassion for perishing souls—the affections which would have given fresh interest to the subject in my own mind, and have stimulated me to go through with its exposition and enforcement; as it was I lost heart after discoursing for some time on our state as dying under the poison of the serpent's sting, and I stammered out some other scraps upon the remaining glorious topics of the subject, and came to an end,—concluding the whole service in an hour and a quarter, instead of the two hours of the preceding day. Oh! it is indeed an arduous thing to preach from supernatural views of divine, supernatural truths. The *Lord* must give these, or they cannot be attained. Yet notwithstanding, arduous preparation, in dependence on his power, in the closet and study, is, I am more fully than ever convinced from to-day's experience, absolutely indispensable, at least for me, to prevent contempt being thrown upon glorious truths from circumstantials of looseness and superficiality which are easily avoided by accurate composition. My classes in the evening were fully as pleasant as usual. In explaining to my young class the first three verses of the 16th of John, and to the more advanced one the subject of divine providence from the catechism, I felt more than usually my faith realizing the truth, and in particular experienced something like freedom in discoursing of the love of Christ and the freeness of the gospel, the subjects which I think I am least of all acquainted with, but which it is most important to understand exactly, and discourse on with fulness and affection. I speak of knowing something of the love of Christ; where is that knowledge now?—now, when my soul seems to sink back into unbelief and carnal ease? Oh Holy Spirit, who dwellest in me, if indeed I am a child of God, awaken my soul, and keep thou it awake! Manifest the Lord Jesus Christ within me, and grant that his love may continually constrain me to live henceforth *no more* to myself but to Him who died for me, and rose again. Amen.

"*October* 25*th.* (Glasgow sacrament and fast-day.)—Since last date I have had considerable varieties of outward circumstances and of inward spiritual experience. The dealings of the Lord's providence have been uniformly prosperous, and demand the most fervent and unceasing gratitude, which, alas! I have not given, and cannot give, till I receive it of his infinite and sovereign grace. I have few remarkable discoveries by the Spirit, either of myself or of 'the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,' but I think I have still had some advancement, displaying itself in a more staid waiting upon God, and finding the mysteries of the gospel more natural to my soul in worship, and in teaching my classes. To-day I have been in some degree waiting for the manifestations of God, but with little enlargement of spirit in prayer, either for myself or others. At worship I was enabled to speak more fully, boldly, and sweetly for the Lord than usual; but where again is that experience now? It is gone! Alas! the fogs of unbelief and carnal affection seem to be gendered almost by the beams of divine glory coming into contact with the marshy putrid soil of corrupted nature. That which is born of the flesh is *flesh*, that alone which is born of the Spirit is spirit. I am dependent for *every acting* of gracious affection on the power of the Spirit, as well as for the first production of the new nature. How sovereign then, and uncaused by anything in me, is the ineffably gracious and blessed love of the Godhead! My classes appear (especially the young women's) to be in rather a hopeful state, but ah! where is my travailing in birth till Christ be formed in them? Grant me this, O Lord, and then bestow a blessing above all that I can ask or think, to the praise of the glory of thy grace in Jesus the beloved. Amen."

Thus was he passing more and more within the deep shadow of that great work to which he had devoted his life, and the commencement of which was now so nearly approaching. How solemnly that shadow fell upon him may be partly gathered from an incident which was related to me recently by one who of all others knew him the earliest and the best. She had gone into Glasgow, unknown to him, on some domestic errand, and was passing through the narrow covered street called the Argyle Arcade, when she saw him turn the corner in front, and advance slowly towards her from the opposite direction as in deep reverie. Though she went up straight to him, he was quite unconscious of her presence, and started, when addressed, as from a dream. "O mother," said he with deep emotion, "I did not see you: for when walking along Argyle Street just now, I was so overcome with the sight of the countless crowds of immortal beings eagerly hasting hither and thither, but all posting onwards towards the eternal world, that I could bear it no longer, and turned in here to seek relief in quiet thought." The great deep had been stirred up once more, but by a mightier and more sacred impulse than in former days.

He was licensed to preach the gospel by the presbytery of Glasgow on the 27th day of March, 1839.

CHAPTER III.

1839.

OPENING MINISTRY.

In the report of the University Missionary Association for the year 1838, the seventeenth from its institution, I find the following interesting notice:—"Gratifying as the preceding facts must be regarded, it is with deeper gratitude and far higher pleasure that your committee intimate the fact that *two* of their own number, the one for two, and the other for four years a member of this society, have during the present session publicly offered themselves to the church of Christ as missionaries to the heathen, and have been accepted. This society has numbered among its members not a few who were devoted to the same high calling, and it is perhaps probable that it has contributed in other cases to foster convictions which afterwards led to a similar dedication; but in the present instance it has formed the principal, if not the only special, instrument which the Lord of the vineyard has employed in calling his professed disciples to engage in this—the noblest department of his service upon earth."

Of the two here mentioned, the subject of this memoir was one, the other being, I think, a member of one of the Nonconformist communions in England, then resident at the University, as a scholar on the Williams' foundation. To his own case my brother makes brief but pregnant reference nine years afterwards in a retrospective notice in his diary, while at sea on his way to China: "At Glasgow University, during the winter 1837–8, I was led, from my connection with the College Missionary Association, to feel so deeply my personal responsibility in regard to the spread of the gospel among the heathen, that after much prayer and many solemn exercises of soul, I took the solemn step of writing to my father, to request that, if he thought good, he should communicate with Dr. Gordon, the convener of our India Committee, and let him know that, should the Church deem me qualified, I would be ready to go as a missionary to Hindustan. He did this, and the committee having given me encouragement in the matter, I looked upon myself as publicly devoted to the missionary field. In my own soul, and in all my public duties connected with missionary meetings, &c. &c., I felt from that time forward a greatly enlarged measure of the presence and blessing of God, tending to confirm me more deeply in my cherished hope and purpose. This was the last session which I needed to spend at College to complete my curriculum; but, partly because I found myself profitably engaged in study, and still more, I believe, because I waited in expectation of a call to the missionary field, I remained at College during the following winter, and in the spring of 1839 a proposal was made by the Colonial Committee that I should go out for a season to fill a charge at St. John's, New Brunswick, and proceed direct from

America to India when the India Committee should require me. It was expected that the India Committee would accede to this proposal, but they refused, wishing that their agents should be free to go when wanted, and so the matter ended. This was at the very time when Mr. M'Cheyne, about to set out for Palestine, wrote, asking me to take his place at Dundee. I found myself unexpectedly free to do this, and being speedily licensed I entered on my duties in that memorable field. This was at the beginning of April. In the month of June or July I received the call that I had long looked for, being asked by the India Committee to go to Poonah in the presidency of Bombay. My engagement at Dundee stood in the way of my at once complying, and another call which the Jewish Committee gave me to go to Aden in Arabia increased the difficulty. While asking guidance in regard to my duty I went to the communion at Kilsyth in July, when the Lord began to employ me in a way so remarkable for the awakening of sinners, that in returning to Dundee, and finding myself in the midst of a great spiritual awakening, I was obliged to make known to both committees that, while my views regarding missionary work remained unchanged, yet I found that I must for the time remain where I was, and fulfil the work which God was laying upon me with a mighty hand."

In giving this extract I have somewhat anticipated the course of events in that part of the narrative on which we are now entering; but it was necessary to do so, in order to present in a clear light the relation in which my brother at this time, and for several years thereafter, stood towards that great work to which he had solemnly, and as he deemed irrevocably, dedicated himself. He had given himself deliberately, and in some sense publicly, before God and His church, to the service of Christ in the field of heathen missions, and he believed the offering had been accepted.

Having thus lifted up his hand unto the Lord, he felt the vows of the great Master upon him ever after, and he never drew back or dreamed of drawing back. Their performance was deferred only, not relinquished, and deferred not by himself, but by Him to whom they had been made, and at whose disposal he had wholly and unreservedly placed himself. And so, when nine years afterwards the long-expected summons suddenly came to him, it found him with the unchanged purpose still fresh upon his soul, and ready to march at a moment's warning at the great Captain's bidding. Meanwhile the field immediately before him was white unto the harvest, and he was thrust forth into the midst of it by a high and mighty hand. A great work was laid upon him which could neither be evaded nor postponed, and he had no choice but to give himself wholly to it, and to do it with his might. The door opened to him was wide and effectual, beyond probably what he had ever dreamed. He had indeed, as I distinctly remember, very exalted views of what might be expected even in these latter days from the outpouring of the Spirit, in answer to the earnest prayers of a reviving Church. His mind had dwelt much, in common with many others about that time, on the divine promises to that effect, and on the grand typical fulfilment of them on the day of Pentecost. That memorable scene he regarded not as an isolated event, but as a pattern of what the Church might hope in any age to see, it might be even still more gloriously. Even some of the most startling outward manifestations of the Spirit's working then displayed he regarded not as exceptional circumstances, but as what might be repeated any day before our eyes. The cloven tongues, and the gift of many languages, had indeed passed away, with the age of miracle to which they essentially belonged; but the cries of stricken consciences and the loud sobs of broken hearts belonged not to that age, but to every age, and would, he believed, be heard more or less wherever in a congregated multitude of sinful men the arrows of the mighty King are sharp in the hearts of his enemies. I remember having a discussion with him on this very subject in the course of a quiet walk from Glasgow towards our home at Kilsyth, shortly before he commenced his work in Dundee. I ventured to question whether, even though the working of the divine Spirit in the bosom of a Christian congregation were as powerful and profound as in pentecostal times, the habitual reserve and self-restraint of modern life, especially amongst the more educated classes, would not prevent such unrestrained expression of inward feelings, as that there displayed. To this view he demurred, deeming that if the mighty rushing wind, which bloweth where it listeth, should indeed come with power, we should hear the sound thereof, so that even the world itself should not be able wholly to close its ears. Little did I think that within a month or two of that time, and in the parish church of that very place to which we were then bending our steps, I should myself witness what seemed so remarkable a verification of his words. Probably he himself, even while arguing the possibility of such a thing, little dreamed that it was in truth so near at hand.

He entered on his labours at Dundee on the first or second Sabbath of April, taking as his text Romans xii. 1,—the same words on which he had preached his first sermon in his father's pulpit at Kilsyth a short time before, and which were in truth prophetic of the whole spirit and character of his future life and ministry. The work he now undertook was indeed an arduous, and to one so young and inexperienced, a peculiarly trying one. Robert Murray M'Cheyne, whose name has since become a household word throughout the universal Church, was already widely known throughout Scotland as one of the most gifted, holy, and successful ministers of recent times; and it was no light or easy thing for any one to enter, even for a season, into his labours. An overflowing congregation, of every class and degree in life, drawn together, many of them, from considerable distances in the town and country round, accustomed to the charm of a peculiar ministry which would be apt to render any ordinary teaching tame and common-place, and above all, throbbing throughout with a high tone of spiritual excitement which it was difficult to meet and to sustain, presented altogether a sphere of labour from which the young evangelist, profoundly conscious of his own insufficiency, might well recoil. But it was, in truth, that very consciousness of insufficiency, and consequent utter abnegation of all trust in himself, that made him strong. Feeling in the depths of his soul that without Christ he could do nothing, but that through his grace strengthening him he could do all things, there did not, after all, seem to him so much difference in point of mere difficulty between one duty and another. Without the immediate presence and help of his divine Master he could not speak even to a handful of little children in a Sunday-school; with that presence and help he could stand unabashed before the mightiest and the wisest in the world. It will be seen from constant entries in his journal how perpetually present was this thought to his mind, and how it formed the master principle of his whole life and ministry; and it seems to me to have been so in a very remarkable degree from the beginning. And hence, no doubt, it was that on the very first day of his ministering before that great congregation, and when many anxious eyes were turned on the youthful face and form of one who seemed to them all too weak for such a burden, he appeared conspicuously calm and self-possessed, as one visibly standing in the shadow of the Almighty, and consciously speaking the words that were given him of the Lord. I have heard old members of the congregation tell how their hearts trembled for him, when they saw what seemed to them a mere stripling standing up in the place of one whom they so revered and honoured, and how almost at the first sound of his voice, as he led with such deep-toned spirituality and power the prayers of the sanctuary, their fears vanished, and they seemed to hear only the sound of his Master's feet behind him. Accordingly he seems from the first to have taken a singularly fast hold of the congregation, and to have filled to a degree which one would scarcely have thought possible, alike in authority and spiritual power, the place of their absent pastor. Young, inexperienced, measured and slow of speech, gifted with no peculiar charm of poetry or sentiment or natural eloquence or winning sweetness, he bore so manifestly the visible seals of a divine commission, and carried about him withal such an awe of the divine presence and majesty, as to disarm criticism and constrain even careless hearts to receive him as the messenger of God. If his words were sometimes few, naked, unadorned, they were full of weight and power, and went home, as arrows directed by a sure aim, to the hearts and consciences of his hearers. Literally it might be said of him, that his speech and his preaching were not with excellency of speech and man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The result accordingly was soon seen in a visible increase of spiritual inquiry amongst the people, and a generally heightened tone of solemnity and earnestness in the congregation at large. In the words of an esteemed member and office-bearer of the congregation, who has been able to recal with singular distinctness the scenes of those days:—"Scarcely had Mr. Burns entered on his work in St. Peter's here, when his power as a preacher began to be felt. Gifted with a solid and vigorous understanding, possessed of a voice of vast compass and power—unsurpassed even by that of Mr. Spurgeon—and withal fired with an ardour so intense and an energy so exhaustless that nothing could damp or resist it, Mr. Burns wielded an influence over the masses whom he addressed which was almost without parallel since the days of Wesley and Whitfield. Crowds flocked to St. Peter's from all the country round; and the strength of the preacher seemed to grow with the incessant demands made upon it. Wherever Mr. Burns preached a deep impression was produced on his audience, and it was felt to be impossible to remain unconcerned under the impassioned earnestness of his appeals. With him there was no effort at oratorical display, but there was true eloquence; and instances are on record of persons, strong in their self-confidence and enmity to the truth, who fell before its power—who,

"'Though they came to scoff,
Remained to pray.'"

As already hinted, nothing could be more different than the whole style and character of his mind, from that of him whose place he yet so worthily filled. Of the rich aroma of sanctified poetry and pathos which imparted their distinctive charm to the life and writings of M'Cheyne, he had none. His characteristic was strength, not beauty, clearness and force, rather than freshness and fulness of thought and diction; and it was not even, except when he was profoundly stirred by strong spiritual influences, that one became conscious of the deep fountain of enthusiasm and of intense emotion that was within him. In the words of Mr. Moody Stuart, who intimately knew him from the very first days of his spiritual life, and who seems to me to have formed a singularly just estimate of his character and gifts, "the hard plodding for a great object, the sagacious intellect, the quick linguistic apprehension, common sense, mother wit, coolness and presence of mind in every variety of circumstance, were more his natural characteristics, than the elements which go to constitute the enthusiastic and exciting preacher. In the midst of the revival at Kilsyth he would sometimes relieve the tension of his mind by reading the Greek classics; and he possessed the bodily strength, the courage, and all the other qualities that would have enabled him to cross the continent of Africa, like Dr. Livingstone, if he had set his heart on such an object. No man was less a fool by nature, yet no man in modern times did more entirely become a fool for Christ's sake. His preaching was in a most peculiar manner by the power of the Holy Ghost, 'in demonstration of the Spirit and in power,' and 'mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.' He had no pathos, no fancy, little natural enthusiasm, and not much that could be called natural eloquence, but he had a firm grasp of gospel truth, a capacity for clear and forcible statement, and a voice capable of commanding any audience, however large, in the church, in the street, in the field; and when the power of the Spirit rested upon him, there were the thunders of Sinai in all their terrors, the still small voice of the gospel in much of its tenderness, the fervent fluency of a tongue touched with a live coal from the altar, the irrepressible urgency of one standing between the living and the dead, the earnest pressing of salvation that would accept no refusal; himself standing consciously and evidently in the presence of the great God, with heaven and hell and the souls of men open before him, with Jesus Christ filling his heart with his love, and pouring grace into his lips, and with multitudes before him weeping for sorrow over discovered sin, or for joy in a discovered Saviour."

His first impressions of the place and of his work will be partly gathered from the following letter to a sister:—

"*Dundee, Seafield Cottage, April* 10*th*, 1839. . . . I would gladly fill my sheet in narrating what I have been able to ascertain of my situation and circumstances here, were it not that I must husband every moment of my time for my engagements in visiting the sick and dying, examining intending communicants, and preparation for the Sabbath that is approaching. I am not left without many circumstances to encourage me in my arduous labours; not a few hearts seem in a good measure prepared to hear the gospel as the Word of God, and some I have met with whose experience in the spiritual life affords the strongest stimulus to my own growth in grace, and whose ideas of Christian ministrations will, I fear, make me to appear among them as an ignorant babbler. They appear, however, a very kind and not uncharitable class of people, as far as I can discover; they will, I hope, pray for as well as censure me; and as I have had a clear call from the Lord, without my own interference, to come among them, I desire to cast all my burden upon his blessed shoulders, and to wait with earnest wrestlings until he appear among us in his glory to build up Zion. Let us go on to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

It is at this point that the detailed journals of his life and labours, which he began in September, 1838, become for the first time fully available. These will form the main substance of our narrative during the whole period which they cover, supplemented only here and there by such illustrative light as the recollections of others or any surviving fragments of correspondence may throw upon them. They will, I am sure, be far more acceptable to all really interested in his work, than anything, however highly and even truthfully coloured, which could possibly proceed from any other hand. To any one in the slightest degree acquainted with the character of the writer, and who knows how jealously guarded and almost, as one might say, penurious he was of his words in anything relating to himself or his work, these simple but pregnant annals, written as in the presence and under the very eye of God, will have an impressiveness and a meaning beyond the reach of eloquence. At first they are occasionally somewhat broken and fragmentary, but they increase in fulness and freedom as they proceed, and in parts, albeit naked and unadorned as ever, have all the vividness and force of a record written in the field, and amid the thick of battle. The following extracts, relating to the same period to which the letter just quoted belongs, will still further illustrate the nature of his work, and the inner workings of his soul in connection with it, during the first months of his ministry in Dundee, as well as form a fitting introduction to the more stirring scenes which will form the subject of the next chapter:—

"*April*, 17, 1839.—Met with two young communicants, M. W—— and E. W——, by appointment at twelve o'clock. Prayed with them, and conversed with each separately. They both appear hopeful converts to the Lord Jesus. M. W—— doubts the evidence of her faith from want of love to Christ, hardness of heart, &c., and was exhorted to come to Christ for these and all other fruits of the Spirit. E. W—— appeared to think she was a true believer, and gave an interesting account of her supposed conversion under Mr. M'Cheyne's ministry; she is very intelligent, well acquainted with Scripture, and really appears to have known something of genuine spiritual exercise. I prayed with them at parting, and bade them farewell with mixed feelings of joy at the tokens of God's work which I thought I saw, and sorrow that I should feel so little in dealing with cases so interesting and encouraging. O Lord, keep these dear young disciples from the devil, the world, and the flesh; perfect thy love in their hearts, thine image in their souls, and grant to me in thine infinite grace to experience more pure and tender love for the lambs of the flock. This I ask in the name of my Lord Jesus. Amen.

"*Fast-day*, 18*th*.—In coming from the evening discourse I was met by the father of James Wallace, Paton's Lane, a boy of twelve, whom I had previously called to see, and found, on my entrance, to my astonishment and delight, such a specimen (if all signs do not deceive me) of the work of the Holy Spirit as I have I think never before witnessed on a sick-bed, except in the case of ——, Rothesay. . . . . I came away with mingled feelings of astonishment at the work of the Spirit, and desires for gratitude to him for his wondrous love in calling *me* to behold his marvellous works. . . . . Came home tired; had worship, and went to bed at eleven. Unspeakable mercies, unspeakable unfruitfulness and ingratitude. The glory will be all the Lord's, for the mercy and the grace are his. 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not *all* his benefits.' Amen.

"19*th.*— . . . Visited two poor sick people—no decided indication of spiritual life; met communicants at seven—spoke to them on the nature of the Lord's Supper from the questions on that subject in the Shorter Catechism—had some freedom and a little degree of light on the glory of Christ's love in his obedience and sufferings—concluded at nine, and found a dear brother in Christ waiting me, Mr. M'Donald, of Blairgowrie—walked with him to Mr. Thain's, and entered into a proposal that I should exchange pulpits with him before the Assembly, and preach on missions. Came home and prepared for bed at a quarter past eleven.

"*Monday*, *April* 24*th.* . . . . Warned by Mrs. P—— against the danger to which young ministers are exposed; home to my studies at a quarter past eight; got some humiliation, or rather some discovery of pride in prayer. The Lord is indeed infinite in mercy when he bears with me; to his name shall be the praise.

"24*th.* . . . . Home at a quarter past eight; studies till a quarter past ten, interesting and profitable, especially reading from Fleming's remarkable and precious *Fulfilling of the Scripture* regarding the strength afforded to God's saints under trials and for difficult duties. Praise the Lord. But O for a revival of that experimental deep-laid religion which Fleming valued and exemplifies so fully in his pages! 'Awake, awake, O arm of the Lord! awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old.'

"*Evening of* 25*th.* . . . . Discoursed on 1 Cor. i. 26 to the end, not much freedom, but a measure of faith in the truth; then read No. 3 of the Revival Tracts about Baldernock. Discovered through grace, an awful hungering after applause from man, and came home fearing that God may utterly forsake me in consequence of my self-seeking in his service; this He would have done long ago had not his love been free and unchanging in Christ Jesus. O for a spirit of humble wrestling prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that sinners may be awakened, and saints greatly edified and advanced! I wrote something more, had worship, and am now about going to rest. The Lord give me a song in the night to his glorious praise!

"29*th.* I have found no time these past few days to keep a note of memorabilia, and must now shortly review the facts that have occurred in the interval. I have been rising regularly a little after six except to-day, when I lay till eight. On Friday and Saturday I wrote and committed my discourses on Psalms xxiii.; lxxi. 16. Considerably assisted in preparing. On Sabbath had great calmness and composure, but I think a great want of holy thirstings after God. I had, however, more than usual liberty in prayer and preaching, especially in the afternoon. O that Christ were exalted and man forgotten among this people! Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain that they may live. . . . .

"*April* 30*th.*—Called on M—— L——, in distress since the time of the cholera—reading Rutherford's *Letters*—seemed a really experienced child of God—said many striking things: *e.g.* 'The ways of God are strange; we maun just wait to see what airt he taks.' . . . .

"*May* 8*th.* . . . On Friday I went to Blairgowrie—spent the remainder of the day and the morning of Saturday most pleasantly and profitably with my dearly beloved brother R. M'Donald, and also his fellow-labourer Mr. Smith—we had two seasons of special prayer. . . . . Dear A—— was taken ill of scarlet fever on Saturday, and this excited us all a good deal. On Sabbath night he was very anxious to see me regarding the state of his soul; however, we were afraid to increase the fever, and I only stood at his bedside and repeated a few of the invitations to come to Christ for all. I was brought by this event nearer to eternity, and felt more of the reality and awfulness of perdition than I remember ever having before. O that the Lord would sustain me in a constant and prevailing sense of the fearful guilt and danger of sinners remaining at a distance from Christ, and his free and offered gift to perishing sinners.

"*21st.*—In the evening I visited J. W——, where I met K. B——, the woman who sits on the pulpit stair. She said all head-learning could not enable a man to feed the lambs; there must be first repentance, as in the case of Peter. She exhorted me with spiritual earnestness to watch for individual souls, saying, 'You may lose a jewel from your crown; though you do not lose your crown, you may lose a jewel from it.' She appeared to recognize the work of God in my soul, and spoke with great pleasure of the discourses of that day. Praise all to God! I am vile, vile, vile. . . . . O that the Lord would give me the skill of a Brainerd or a Dickson, for my present difficult and most precious duties! 'Establish the work of our hands; yea, the work of our hands do thou establish it.' How various are God's ways of dealing with the soul; how much does he display his sovereign hand in bringing souls under conviction and into the peace of believing. One of the class came upon Monday night when we were dismissing, and asked if I could tell her anything she could do for Christ. O what a precious question, when put in the spirit of Paul—What wilt thou have me to do? Among other things I told her to be sure to ask the Lord himself, and to leave the matter in his hands."

On hearing of one awakened under his sermon on Psalm lxxi. 16, he writes:—

"O marvellous grace, that the Lord should regard *at all* my carnal, self-seeking ministry; to Him be the glory *eternally!* . . . . Lord Jesus, the good Shepherd, lead this wandering sheep to thy fold; even now do thou fan into a flame by the quickening breath of thy Spirit that smoking flax which thou hast touched with the heavenly fire of thy matchless grace, and give me grace—the grace of the indwelling Spirit to fit me for feeding the lambs and tending the sheep. Thy blood and obedience, freely offered to sinners of the deepest dye, are all my pleas with the Father. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, and cause many to say with hearts smitten with the rod of thy strength. 'We would see Jesus.' Amen. . . . . On Sabbath

I preached in the forenoon from Matthew xviii. 2, 'Except ye be converted,' &c.; and in the evening from Psalm cx. 3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;' when a collection of £8, 10*s*. 6*d*. was made to assist in establishing a parochial library. I was more than usually assisted of the Lord all day. O how much I would wonder and adore his long-suffering and grace in bearing with me, and in still *preventing* me with his tender mercies. It is all to the praise of the glory of his grace. 'Not for your sake do I this.' Truth, Lord. 'The *wages* of sin is *death*, but *eternal life* is the *gift* of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

"*July 2d.*—My manifold engagements have prevented me from recording the multiplied and wonderful doings of God towards me in this book which have occurred during the past month. I can now only note a few. I went to Edinburgh on the 8th of June, at Mr. Moody's request, and preached for him on Sabbath afternoon, from Matthew xviii. 2, 'Except ye be converted,' &c. On the Saturday I saw Mr. Candlish and other friends relative to the mission to Aden. That day the Lord directed me most marvellously to meet with several remarkable saints whom I had not before seen. . . . . On my way home I called on Mr. M'Cheyne, and finding that they were dividing a sheet among them, and sending a letter to Constantinople for Mr. R. M. M'Cheyne, I was kindly allowed to occupy part of the remaining space. This was a wonderful day to my soul,—a day fitted to humble me very low before Him under whose teaching I have so little profited in comparison of many others, and to exalt in my eyes more than ever the riches and sovereignty of the grace of a redeeming God. Since I came home, three Sabbaths have elapsed. On the first (June 16), I preached all day from Matthew xi. 28. Owing to my many engagements I had nothing written but a few sentences of the forenoon sermon; but, thanks be to Jesus, on whose strength I was enabled in some degree to rely, I never, perhaps, preached with greater liberty and power. Next Sabbath (23d) I was upon the following two verses. In the forenoon I was considerably deserted of God, and was much weighed down in the interval owing to my having nothing written for the afternoon, and my fears that God was about to make me ashamed before the congregation that I might thenceforward prepare more carefully. I cried to the Lord in my distress, and he heard me, and in the afternoon, as soon as I began to speak upon these words, 'I will give rest to your souls, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light,' I felt most sensibly the quickening breath of the Holy Ghost upon my soul, and was enabled to preach in a way more affectionate, full, and earnest, than almost ever before. I resolved, however, in future to prepare more carefully *if possible.* Last Sabbath (30th) I began in the forenoon to lecture through the Colossians, taking the inscription and salutation as the first subject, and in the afternoon I commenced a series of discourses on Psalm cxxx., taking the help of the great Owen. I was much supported all day, and had nearer views of the holiness of Jehovah than ever before in the pulpit. There are some favourable symptoms of the presence of God among the flock. Two prayer-meetings have begun among the young women, those among the older people are becoming larger and more lively." . . . .

One extract more, taken from a very remarkable letter to Mr. M'Cheyne, will appropriately close this chapter, taking, as it does, a retrospective view of his experience and impressions during this first and introductory period of his ministerial life.

"*Dundee, Nov. 18th*, 1839.—DEAR BROTHER IN JESUS CHRIST,—After having forcibly withdrawn myself from many other pressing engagements, in order to write a few lines to you, I experience the greatest difficulty in making a commencement, from the multitude and variety of the thoughts which rise to view before me. Indeed everything connected with the whole period of my residence here, since April last—a period the most remarkable *but one* (that of conversion) in my own life—and all the thoughts and feelings growing out of these, embarrass and oppress my mind so much that I hardly know what to begin with first.

"God's wonderful and most merciful procedure towards *me*, in connecting me with you and your dearly beloved flock in Dundee, I saw unspeakable cause to admire from the very first moment that that connection was formed. I felt myself, not only *without*, but almost *against* my own intentions, at once drawn into the most endearing union with one of the few ministers in Scotland that I had seen cause to regard as making 'full proof' of the ministry of the gospel of Jesus, and one of the few congregations that I had ever heard spoken of as really deriving *visible* saving benefits from the labours of their pastor. These things made me astonished at the mercies of my God and Saviour from the very first; but *now*, when, after the lapse of seven months, I have been allowed to see, at least, some part of the development of the Lord's designs in this matter, I know not what to say, or how to speak. I feel almost as if it were my duty to be silent in adoring wonder, and leave that theme for the harps of the heavenly Jerusalem, which I can but dishonour while my mind is so blind, my heart so cold, and my mouth so little accustomed to the matchless praises of Jehovah.

"When I came among your people, I found such evidences of the Lord's work in convincing and converting sinners as was truly refreshing to my soul, after having spent *more than seven years* from the time when, if ever, I was brought to know the Lord, without, alas! ever seeing so much *as a single case* of open and visible transition from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. I knew a few who, I had reason to think, had really been brought by the Spirit to the knowledge of Jesus, and a few more who, I hoped, had reached the *extreme edge* of the *safe* side of that line which divides the kingdom of Satan from the kingdom of God; but an awakened sinner seeking after Jesus with the whole heart, I do not remember to have *ever* seen, from the time when I began to feel an interest in looking for such evidences of the Spirit's presence, until, in the astonishing, free, infinite, and sovereign mercy of my matchless Redeemer and Lord, I was sent to your beloved and favoured flock. Here I found not a few who seemed to have passed from death to life, under your ministry; and who, in addition, had got beyond that ice-cold region of formal profession, in which even those who are alive to God are in general afraid to speak, as it were, *above their breath*, of any of those gracious exercises of the regenerate soul, which so much offend, because they so holily condemn, a secure but godless generation of carnal professors. From the atmosphere into which I at once discovered the Lord had brought me, when I entered your church, I learned that there were not a few to whose conversation, as well as to whose minds and hearts, their own state as sinners under a glorious dispensation of divine grace was become familiar. I almost immediately invited, from the pulpit, all those who were under any anxiety about their souls, and might wish private direction, to call on me at particular hours for this purpose; and I soon learned from the intercourse to which this led in many instances, that the necessity of union to Jesus, and entire dedication to his service and his glory, was a truth to which the mind of the congregation *in general* had been brought under your ministry to yield *assent*, and one which, through the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, not a few seemed to have savingly realized in their consciences and hearts. Excited by any intercourse of this kind (the *only* kind, with little exception, that I have had) with your people, *and supported by the prayers of God's children among them*, I prosecuted my labours among them during the first four months of my residence here, with great benefit and pleasure to myself, and not without a pleasing testimony in the consciences and hearts of many of the people of the Lord, that I was really teaching some part of the truth 'as it is in Jesus.' Besides preaching on Sabbath at the usual times, I continued the Thursday prayer-meeting, and the male and female classes, which were all attended, as far as I could find, by about the same number as during your own ministry, and seemed to the outward view to make interesting and encouraging progress. There was one thing, however, that always *appalled* me, when I was enabled to *realize* the necessity of the second birth, that so few seemed, under my ministry, to be awakened to a solemn and *supreme* concern about their souls, though I had every reason to believe that there were hundreds in the congregation and parish who, with a name to live, were, in reality, '*dead* in trespasses and sins.' Many seemed interested, and some of the people of God appeared to be refreshed, but very few, indeed only two or three persons, awakened for the first time from the sleep of carnal security, came to me in anxiety for direction in the way to Zion. I sought to declare the truth of God both in the law and the gospel with all faithfulness on every occasion, and to 'labour fervently in prayer to God' in behalf of the people at all times; but still there was no appearance of a general awakening among them to the sense of their natural state of sin and misery, and of their absolute need of the glorious Saviour who is offered freely to sinners in the gospel. I always felt as if the ground which was won from the enemy on Sabbath was lost during the following week. Many of the people I feared were in danger of thinking of whatever was said to them as doctrine, suited to the pulpit and the Sabbath, but not to be considered true and of supreme importance on week-days and at their ordinary business; and thus, however plainly their state was taught, and however urgently they were besought to flee to the Lord Jesus as the only Saviour, they seemed still in general to continue going on in the beaten track of their ungodliness, impenitence, and unbelief. There were a few fellowship meetings in the parish while you were here, and these had increased but very inconsiderably in number and size. Still there were at the time when I was called to leave the people in order to attend at my father's communion, some indications of an approaching revival of the work of God among them. There appeared to be an increasing earnestness in desire and prayer among the people of God, and especially, I think, among the younger Christians who had been brought to Christ under your own ministry, for a larger outpouring of the Spirit of God, and a more general awakening and converting of souls to Jesus. I remember of being told also, at the time when I was going away to Kilsyth, by a person to whom I had been lamenting the little success that seemed to attend the preaching of the Word, that she had seen several persons from time to time around her shedding tears upon the Sabbath; and the very last time that I met the male class before my departure, I was encouraged by noticing more than usual solemnity among all, and one young man in particular, who has since, I trust, been savingly converted, weeping profusely, while I was pressing the necessity of a full and immediate acceptance of the Lord Jesus."

Thus already had the fond anticipation of the absent pastor in behalf of his youthful assistant begun to be realized: "You are given," he had said, "in answer to prayer, and these gifts are, I believe, always, without exception, blessed." Thus far he had proved faithful in keeping the vineyard of another; but he was now on the eve of being called to enter on a field and line of service peculiarly his own.

CHAPTER IV.

1839.

REVIVAL SCENES.

The subject of the revival of religion as the great want of the times had been already, and for a long time, much in the minds both of the pastor and the people of Kilsyth. The memorable scenes of the years 1742–3, when, under the ministry of the Rev. James Robe, this parish shared with that of Cambuslang in so remarkable an effusion of the Spirit of grace, still lived as a cherished tradition in the hearts of the people, and there were still here and there little companies of praying souls, "who spake one to another" of the good days of the past, and who "sighed and cried" over the subsequent times of declension and backsliding. There was, I believe, at least one society for religious fellowship which had survived, in the uninterrupted succession of its members, all through the intervening period, and whose lamp of faith and prayer was still found faintly burning, when the light of a new morning broke upon them, and the whole parish seemed to awake as "from a dream of a hundred years." Into those sacred reminiscences and aspirations my father entered most profoundly from the first day of his ministry here in 1821, and laboured unceasingly thenceforward to keep them alive both in his own heart and in those of his people. In the words of his own biography, "his public instructions as well as private conversation, at visitations and elsewhere, abounded with allusions to those happy days of the past, and with expressions of ardent longing for their return; and to this point might the whole course of his ministry be said more or less to turn. In 1822, the second year of his ministry, we find him along with another congenial spirit, the humble and godly Dr. George Wright of Stirling, bending over the old records of the kirk-session bearing on the dates 1742–9, and with solemn interest deciphering the dim and fading lines that referred to the incidents of the work as then in progress. Towards the close of the same year (Dec. 1822), on two successive Sabbaths, he preached directly and fully on the subject, taking for his text those singularly appropriate and impressive words in Micah vii. 1—'Woe is me, for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape-gleanings of the vintage; there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the first ripe fruit:'—bringing the whole case of past attainment and subsequent declension before the congregation, and calling upon them again to arise and seek the Lord. In 1830, in consequence of some unusual outbreaks of sin, in connection with drunken brawls, a parochial day of fasting and prayer, in the view of prevailing sins and backslidings, was appointed by the kirk-session, and observed with marked seriousness and solemnity. In 1832 the near approach of the cholera, which fell heavily on the neighbouring village of Kirkintilloch, but never actually entered Kilsyth, while sounding its own terrible peal, at the same time summoned the pastor to lift up his voice in another earnest call to repentance and newness of life. In 1836 he read an elaborate essay before a clerical society in Glasgow with the twofold object of calling more extensive attention to the subject, and of drawing forth the suggestions of his brethren in regard to some signs of awakening life which were even then appearing in his own parish." About the same time he sought by means of brief but pointed pastoral addresses to "heads of families," and on "family worship," which he printed and presented to every household in his parish, to revive the spirit of personal and family religion amongst his people. Finally, on a Sabbath afternoon in August, 1838, standing on the grave of his revered predecessor Mr. Robe, on the anniversary of his death, and taking as his text the words inscribed in Hebrew letters on his tomb, Isaiah xxvi. 19, he pled before a vast assemblage of his people in behalf of Christ and the new birth unto eternal life, in tones of unaccustomed earnestness, and which stirred the hearts of many in a manner never to be forgotten. By such means as these did he seek through successive years to strengthen the things that remained and were ready to die, and, if so it might be, fan the feeble spark once more into a flame. The result was seen in a growingly heightened tone of moral and religious life in the congregation and parish generally, as well as latterly in more specific tokens of the divine power and presence, which seemed the precursors of a still richer blessing yet to come. There was a marked increase of seriousness and devout earnestness in public worship. Prayer-meetings became at once more numerous and more fervent. One or two sermons at communion times, marked by a peculiar unction and power, had fallen with visibly solemnizing effect on the congregation—one in particular, by the Rev. A. N. Somerville of Anderston, Glasgow, on the words, "Behold I stand at the door and knock," which imprinted itself on many hearts, and was afterwards often referred to as marking an era in the religious history of the parish. Conversions, in fine, of a more than usually striking kind, became more frequent, and contributed at once to arrest the attention of the careless, and to animate the hopes and quicken the prayers of those who were looking and longing for the heavenly shower.

Meanwhile influences of a concurrent kind were at work elsewhere, and tended still further to quicken the pulse of religious life in the place. Similar tokens of reviving earnestness were appearing more or less extensively amongst the members of the other Christian denominations around, and particularly in connection with a small but very fervent society of Wesleyan Methodists, whose distinctive teaching tended greatly to emphasize in the minds of the people the great ideas of conversion, the new birth, and the conscious peace and life of God, and whose unwearied activity and zeal for the gathering in of souls spread by a happy infection to the hearts of others.

It was in these circumstances, and to a field thus prepared, that the young evangelist now came, bearing the precious seed which he had already sown with such hopeful promise in Dundee. The remarkable scene which followed has been already often described, and I should have almost shrunk from attempting any fresh account of it, did there not happily survive a full and deliberate statement from my brother's own hand, which will enable us to survey it from a new and deeply interesting point of view. It was written during a quiet interval in the manse of Kilsyth exactly a year after the occurrences to which it refers, and is couched in a tone of solemn thoughtfulness and utter self-abnegation, in the presence of Him whose wondrous works he records, which imparts a peculiar weight to every word, and the impression of which would be marred only, not helped, by any laboured description of ours:—

"Having a spare hour, it has occurred to my mind that it may be for the glory of God that I should at last record my recollections of the marvellous commencement of the Lord's glorious work in this place in the month of July, 1839, and I entreat the special aid of the Holy Ghost, that I may write according to his own will and for the divine glory regarding these wonders of the

Lord Jehovah. During the first four months of my ministry, which were spent at Dundee, I enjoyed much of the Lord's presence in my own soul, and laid in large stores of divine knowledge in preparing from week to week for my pulpit services in St. Peter's Church. But though I endeavoured to speak the truth fully, and to press it earnestly on the souls of the people, there was still a defect in my preaching at that time which I have since learned to correct, viz. that, partly from unbelieving doubts regarding the truth in all its infinite magnitude, and partly from a tendency to shrink back from speaking in such a way as visibly and generally to alarm the people, I never came, as it were, to throw down the gauntlet to the enemy by the unreserved declaration and urgent application of the divine testimony regarding the state of fallen man and the necessity of an unreserved surrender to the Lord Jesus in all his offices in order that he may be saved. However, I was gradually approaching to this point, which I had had in my eye as the grand means of success in converting souls, from the first time I entered the pulpit, and even from the day of my own remarkable conversion, of which I trust the Lord may enable me to leave some record behind on this earth for the glory of his own infinite *sovereign* and everlasting love in Christ. During the last three Sabbaths that I was at Dundee, before coming to Kilsyth, I was led in a great measure to preach without writing, not because I neglected to study, but in order that I might study and pray for a longer time; and in preaching on the subjects which I had thus prepared, I was more than usually sensible of the divine support. The people also seemed to feel more deeply solemnized, and I was told of some who were shedding silent tears under the word of the Lord. I was to have preached on the evening of the fast-day at Kilsyth, July 18th, but the burial of my dear brother-in-law, George Moody, at Paisley, was fixed for that day, and I was of course obliged to be present thereat. His death was accompanied with a blessing from Jehovah to my soul. I never enjoyed, I think, sweeter realizations of the glory and love of Jesus, and of the certainty and blessedness of his eternal kingdom, than when at Paisley on this solemn occasion. The beautifully consistent and holy walk of our dear departed brother, with the sweet divine serenity that marked the closing scene of his life, made his death very affecting, and eminently fitted to draw away the heart of the believer after him to Jesus in the heavenly glory. This was its effect on my soul through the Lord's power. On the way to the grave I wept with joy, and could have praised the Lord aloud for his love in allowing me to assist in carrying to the bed of rest a member of his 'own body, of his flesh, and of his bones;' and when I looked for the last time on the coffined body in its narrow, low, solitary, cold resting-place, I had a glorious anticipation of the second coming of the Lord, when he would himself raise up in glory everlasting that dear body which he had appointed us to bury in its corruption and decay.

"I have taken this retrospect of circumstances in my own history previous to the time of my coming to Kilsyth, as they bore very powerfully upon my own state of mind, and were among the means by which the Lord finished my preparation—a preparation which he had begun even in my infancy—for being employed as his poor and despised but yet honoured instrument in beginning and in assisting to carry on the wonderful work that followed. I was appointed to preach at Kilsyth on Friday evening. I did so from Psalm cxxx. 1, 2, a subject I had lately handled in Dundee after studying Owen's treatise on this psalm. I believe I preached with considerable solemnity, and in a manner in some degree fitted to alarm unconverted sinners and sleeping saints. I remember that some of the people of God seemed to respond with great fulness of heart to many of my petitions in public prayer, that while I was preaching there was a deep solemnity upon the audience, and that some of the Lord's people met me as I retired apparently much affected and testifying that the Lord had been among us. On Saturday I preached at Banton from Psalm cxxx. 3, with considerable assistance, as far as I can recollect. My uncle Dr. Burns of Paisley seemed to feel as if the Lord was with me, and kindly asked me to take his place at Kilsyth on Sabbath evening, leaving him to fill mine on Monday forenoon. He spoke also, I remember, in the family of its not being my duty to go abroad as I was on the eve of doing, but that I should be a home missionary in Scotland. I myself did not speculate anxiously about the future, but desired to be an instrument of advancing his work at the present time. In the evening of Saturday I met with one or two persons under deep distress of soul; and one of these, who is now a consistent follower of Jesus, seemed to enter into the peace of God while I was praying with her. This brought the work of the Spirit before me in a more remarkable and glorious form than I had before witnessed it, and served at once to quicken my desires after, and encourage my anticipations of seeing some glorious manifestation of the Lord's saving strength. On Sabbath everything went on as usual until the conclusion of the third table service, if I remember right, when Dr. Burns kindly shortened his own address and introduced me to the people, that I might give a short address not only to the communicants but to all present in the church. I had no precise subject in view on which to speak, but when rising was led to John xx., if I mistake not, simply by its opening to me and appearing suitable. This subject I tried to generalize as depicting the experience of a saint in seeking communion with Jesus, and the manner in which Jesus often deals with such. I had much assistance, and was especially enabled to charge hundreds of the communicants with betraying Christ at his table. I heard afterwards of some that were much moved at this time, and in particular of one woman who was then first apprehended by the Spirit and has been to all appearance converted. In the evening I preached from Matthew xi. 28, but, as far as I can recollect, without remarkable assistance or remarkable effects. At the close, however, I felt such a yearning of heart over the poor people among whom I had spent so many of my youthful years in sin, that I intimated I would again address them before bidding them farewell—it might be never to meet again on earth; and that I would do so in the market-place, in order to reach the many who absented themselves from the house of God, and after whom I longed in the bowels of Jesus Christ. This meeting was fixed for Tuesday at 10 A.M., as I intended that day to leave Kilsyth on my return to Dundee. On Monday evening we had a meeting of the Missionary Society—Dr. Burns preached an excellent sermon from Isaiah lii. 1. in which some things were said upon Christ's wedding-garment which touched my heart. In speaking I felt the case of the heathen lying nearer my heart than I think ever before or since, and was enabled, though without any previous idea of what I was to say, to speak with liberty and power of the Holy Ghost.

"This and all other similar facts I would testify as in the sight of Jehovah, and as being obliged to do so for his glory. May he enable me to give the glory all to him, and take none of it at all to my own cursed flesh! The people seemed much impressed. The meeting, however, was not very large. I can hardly recall the feelings with which I went to preach on Tuesday morning—a morning fixed from all eternity in Jehovah's counsels as an era in the history of redemption. May the Holy Ghost breathe upon my soul and revive in my memory, too faithless, alas! to the records of the Lord's wondrous works, the recollection of the marvellous scene which was then displayed before the wondering eyes of many favoured sinners in this place. Though I cannot speak with precision of the frame of soul in which I went to the Lord's work on that memorable day, yet I remember in general that I had an intense longing for the conversion of souls and the glory of Emmanuel, that I mourned under a sense of the awful state of sinners without Christ, their guilt in rejecting him as freely offered to their acceptance, my own total inability to help them by anything that I could do, and my complete unfitness and unworthiness to be an instrument in the hands of the Holy Ghost in saving their souls; while at the same time my eyes were fixed on the Lord as the God of salvation with a sweet hope of his glorious appearing. I have since heard that some of the people of God in Kilsyth who had been longing and wrestling for a time of refreshing from the Lord's presence, and who had during much of the previous night been travailing in birth for souls, came to the meeting not only with the hope, but with well-nigh the certain anticipation of God's glorious appearing, from the impressions they had had upon their own souls of Jehovah's approaching glory and majesty, especially when pleading at his footstool. The morning proved very unfavourable for our assembling in the open air, and this seems to have been a wise providential arrangement; for while, on the one hand, it was necessary that our meeting should be intimated for the open air, in order to collect the great multitude; on the other hand, it was very needful, in order to the right management of so glorious a work as that which followed, that we should be assembled within doors. At ten o'clock I went down to the middle of the town, and with some others drove up before us some stragglers who were remaining behind the crowd. When I entered the pulpit, I saw before me an immense multitude from the town and neighbourhood filling the seats, stairs, passages, and porches, all in their ordinary clothes, and including many of the most abandoned of our population. I began, I think, by singing the 102d Psalm, and was affected deeply when in reading it I came to these lines:

"'Her time for favour which was set,
Behold, is *now* come to an end.'

That word '*now*' touched my heart as with divine power, and encouraged the sweet hope that the set time was really *now* at hand. I read without comment, but with solemn feelings, the account of the conversion of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost; and this account, I am told, affected some of the people considerably. When we had prayed a second time, specially imploring that the Lord would open on us the windows of heaven, I preached from the words (Psalm cx. 3): 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.' This subject I had studied and preached on at Dundee without any remarkable effect; and though I was so much enlarged on this occasion in discoursing from it, I have not been able to treat it in the same manner, or with the same effects, at any subsequent time. The following was the plan of the remarks which I was led to make upon the words:—I. The persons spoken of—they are God's elect—those given to Christ of the Father. II. The promise of the Father to Emmanuel regarding these persons—'they shall be willing.' 1. Willing to be saved by Christ's righteousness alone. 2. Willing to take on his yoke. 3. Willing to bear his cross. III. The time of the promise—the day of Emmanuel's power. 1. It is the day of his exaltation at the Father's right hand (verse 1), *i.e.* the latter day. 2. It is the day of the free preaching of the Divine word. 3. It is the day in which Christ crucified is the centre and sum of the doctrine taught. 4. It is the day of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit—'The Lord shall send,' &c. I was led under this last particular to allude to some of the most remarkable outpourings of the Spirit that have been granted to the church, beginning from the day of Pentecost; and in surveying this galaxy of Divine wonders, I had come to notice the glorious revelation of Jehovah's right hand which was given at the Kirk of Shotts in 1630, while John Livingstone was preaching from Ezekiel xxxvi. 26, 27, when it pleased the sovereign God of grace to make bare his holy arm in the midst of us, and to perform a work in many souls resembling that of which I had been speaking, in majesty and glory! In referring to this wonderful work of the Spirit, I mentioned the fact that when Mr. Livingstone was on the point of closing his discourse a few drops of rain began to fall, and that when the people began to put on their coverings, he asked them if they had any shelter from the drops of Divine wrath, and was thus led to enlarge for nearly another hour in exhorting them to flee to Christ, with so much of the power of God, that about five hundred persons were converted. And just when I was speaking of the occasion and the nature of this wonderful address, I felt my own soul moved in a manner so remarkable that I was led, like Mr. Livingstone, to plead with the unconverted before me *instantly* to close with God's offers of mercy, and continued to do so until the power of the Lord's Spirit became so mighty upon their souls as to carry all before it, like the rushing mighty wind of Pentecost! During the whole of the time that I was speaking, the people listened with the most rivetted and solemn attention, and with many silent tears and inward groanings of the spirit; but at the last their feelings became too strong for all ordinary restraints, and broke forth simultaneously in weeping and wailing, tears and groans, intermingled with shouts of joy and praise from some of the people of God. The appearance of a great part of the people from the pulpit gave me an awfully vivid picture of the state of the ungodly in the day of Christ's coming to judgment. Some were screaming out in agony; others, and among these strong men, fell to the ground as if they had been dead; and such was the general commotion, that after repeating for some time the most free and urgent invitations of the Lord to sinners (as Isaiah lv., Revelation xxii. 17), I was obliged to give out a psalm, which was soon joined in by a considerable number, our voices being mingled with the mourning groans of many prisoners sighing for deliverance. After Dr. Burns and my father had spoken for a little and prayed, the meeting was closed at three o'clock, intimation having been given that we would met again at six.

"To my own astonishment during the progress of this wonderful scene, when almost all present were overpowered, it pleased the Lord to keep my soul perfectly calm. Along with the awful and affecting realization which I obtained of the state of the unconverted, I had such a view of the glory redounding to God, and the blessings conferred on poor sinners, by the work that was advancing, as to fill my soul with tranquil joy and praise. Indeed I was so composed, that when, with the view of recruiting my strength for the labours still in view, I stretched myself on my bed on going home, I enjoyed an hour of the most refreshing sleep, and rose as vigorous in mind and body as before."

I have now before me the notes from his own manuscript of the sermon, the delivery of which was productive of so remarkable an effect; but it may well be conceived that in this case the written words convey but a very inadequate impression of the spoken address, to which they scarcely bore a greater resemblance than the black glistening fuel to the live coal glowing with bright furnace heat. His manner indeed at first, and through nearly one-half of the discourse, was, as usual, calm, deliberate, measured; nor did he, I think, greatly diverge either in words or in sequence of thought, from the line of the written discourse; but there was about him throughout an awful solemnity, as if his soul was overshadowed with the very presence of Him in whose name he spoke; and as he went on, that presence seemed more and more to pass within him, and to possess him, and to bear him along in a current of strong emotion, which was alike to himself and to his hearers irresistible. Appeal followed appeal in ever-increasing fervour and terrible energy, till at last, as he reached the climax of his argument, and vehemently urged his hearers to fight the battle that they might win the eternal prize, the words, "no cross, no crown," pealed from his lips, not so much like a sentence of ordinary speech, as a shout in the thick of battle. Another moment of intense and incontrollable emotion I vividly remember. In urging sinners to an immediate closing with Christ in the offers of his grace, he had made use of the obvious and very common figure of a life-boat bringing hope and deliverance to the side of a foundering vessel; when in developing the idea and dwelling on it, the whole scene seemed to pass in living reality before his eyes—the doomed bark rolling helplessly amid the wild waves, and rapidly settling down; the crouching, trembling throng clinging to the gunwale, and the light buoyant skiff leaping up towards them amid the blinding spray, so near that they might almost touch it; and as he saw them still hesitating and wasting in fatal inaction the last moments of opportunity, he cried aloud as one might do from the summit of a neighbouring headland on the shore, "Are you in? are you in? Flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before you; now or never." There was in his whole style and manner at this moment, as frequently afterwards at similar times, a dramatic vividness and energy, which reminded one of what we read of in Whitfield;—a vividness and energy, however, which in my brother's case was not in any measure due to a graphic poetic fancy, but simply to an intense and awful realization of eternal truths. As to the scene itself which followed, I can think of no better description than the account of the day of Pentecost, in the second chapter of the Acts, of which both in its immediate features and in its after results, and in everything except the miraculous gift of tongues, it seems to me to have been an exact counterpart.

It is from this time that we must date a remarkable change in my brother's manner of preaching, which Mr. Moody Stuart has described in a manner so admirable, that I am tempted to transcribe his words: "At Kilsyth there was fulfilled in him the promise, 'The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in.' For weeks before he was full of prayer; he seemed to care for nothing but to pray. In the day-time, alone or with others, it was his chief delight, and in the night watches he might be overheard praying aloud. Yet during this time the power that rested upon himself did not affect his preaching; it was sensible, clear, orthodox, unobjectionable; and in that indeed he never altered; for in the midst of whatever excitement, there was never any eccentricity or extravagance of doctrine, or even the extreme pressing of any one point; but a steadfast keeping within lines of received truth, as not expecting conversion by any special way of stating the gospel, but by the power of the Spirit accompanying it. For a season, however, before the Kilsyth communion, he seemed two different men in private and public—his own spiritual strength so far exceeding what appeared in the pulpit. But then the Lord, who had strengthened David to slay the lion and the bear in the recesses of the mountains, sent him forth to triumph over Goliath before the hosts of Israel. He had been asking, seeking, knocking for the Holy Spirit; that Spirit came upon him with power; and the Lord added unto the church daily such as should be saved, multitudes both of men and women."

The movement thus begun in a manner so remarkable, went on steadily, and for weeks thereafter seemed only to grow in solidity and depth. Meetings for prayer and preaching of the gospel were held every successive night, generally in the church, and occasionally, when the weather favoured, in the market-place or in the church-yard. Crowds of inquirers flocked at every invitation to the vestry or the manse to seek spiritual counsel from the minister and his assistants. Prayer-meetings both of the old and young sprang up everywhere in the village and the surrounding hamlets. The neighbouring extension church of Banton, erected through my father's exertions a short time before, and then under the pastoral care of the Rev. John Lyon, now of Broughty-Ferry, became the scene of a similar work of awakening and spiritual blessing. Ministers from all parts of the country, and especially from the neighbouring city of Glasgow, came to the help of the overtasked pastor, and greatly contributed by the richness and variety of their instructions to impart stability and spiritual substance to a movement which might otherwise have largely evaporated in mere excitement. The mountain glen, the solitary haugh, even the noisy loomshop, became vocal often with the sounds of prayer and praise, or witnessed the solemn converse of brethren who, at eventide, talked with burning hearts of the things that had come to pass in those days. The whole tone and spirit of the place seemed for the moment changed, and an air almost Sabbatic brooded over it, which strangers recognized as with instinctive reverence they approached the spot. In the words of a statement read at the time by the minister of the parish to the presbytery of the bounds—

> "The waiting on of young and older people at the close of each meeting, and the anxious asking of so many 'What to do;' the lively singing of the praises of God, which every visitor remarks; the complete desuetude of swearing and of foolish talking in our streets; the order and solemnity at all hours prevailing; the voice of praise and prayer almost in every house; the cessation of the tumults of the people; the consignment to the flames of volumes of infidelity and impurity; the coming

together for Divine worship of such a multitude of our population day after day; the large catalogue of new intending communicants giving in their names, and conversing in the most interesting manner on the most important subjects; not a few of the old careless sinners and frozen formalists awakened and made alive to God; the conversion of several poor colliers, who have come to me and given the most satisfactory account of their change of mind and heart,—are truly wonderful proofs of a most surprising and delightful revival. The public-houses, the coal-pits, the harvest reaping fields, the weaving loomsteads, the recesses of our glens, and the sequestered haughs around, all may be called to witness that there is a mighty change in this place for the better."

The subject of this memoir had been obliged to leave a few days after the commencement of the remarkable scenes just described, in order to resume his duties at Dundee, where his work was becoming every day more interesting; but on the 21st of September he was again at Kilsyth, taking part in the services of a second communion, which the new birth of so many souls, and the fresh baptism and abounding joy of others, had rendered necessary. It was a season long to be remembered, alike for the solemnity and sacred sweetness of its services, and for the rich tokens of blessing which both accompanied and followed it. To use again the grave words of the pastor, "Having been preceded, accompanied, and followed by a very unusual copiousness of prayer, the showers in answer were very copious and refreshing. We are daily hearing of good done to strangers who came Zaccheus-like to see what it was, who have been pierced in heart and have gone away new men. Our own people of Christian spirit have been greatly enlivened and strengthened, and some very hopeful cases of apparently real beginnings of new life have been brought to our knowledge. I feel grateful to the God of grace and God of order in the churches, that there has been such a concurrence of what is true, venerable, pure, just, lovely, and of good report, and that little indeed has escaped from any of us which can justly cause regret. . . . . The solemn appearance of the communion tables, and the delightful manner in which they were exhorted—the presence of not a few unusually young disciples at the tables—the seriousness of aspect in all, and the softening and melting look of others—made upon every rightly disposed witness a very delightful impression. . . . . For ninety years, doubtless, there has not been in this parish such a season of prayer and holy communings and conferences, nor at any period such a number of precious sermons delivered. The spiritual awakenings and genuine conversions at this time are not few, and it is hoped will come forth to victory; but the annals of eternity only will divulge the whole." At this point my brother's personal journal, which the exciting and absorbing labours of the last month had almost wholly interrupted, becomes again available, and I gladly return to it, as furnishing at once the most authentic and most impressive account both of the work in which he was engaged and of the part which he himself bore in it.

"*Saturday*, 21*st September*, 1839.—I stayed at Mr. Guthrie's[1] all night, and started at seven A.M. by the boat for Kilsyth. The boat was nearly filled in the cabin by dear brothers and sisters in Christ, going to the communion at Kilsyth. We had much blessed converse together, and engaged twice in prayer and once in praise. We arrived at a quarter to one, and found that I was expected to officiate at half-past two o'clock. I accordingly preached to about a thousand from Romans x. 4, with much assistance. On Sabbath, after Mr. Rose had preached at the tent, I was called on to follow him; and accordingly preached for about two hours from Isaiah liv. 5, to a congregation which, according to a calculation founded on the extent of the ground which it occupied, is thought to have been little short of ten thousand. They were very solemn and attentive, hardly one removing during the sermon; and though I did not notice many under visible impression, I was told that not a few were in tears, young men as well as others. After leaving the tent I went to the communion table, which was addressed in a most interesting way upon the love of Christ by Mr. Rose. I did not, however, experience much near communion with my blessed Lord and Saviour, but had to complain of much blindness and deadness, while my soul was not altogether unmoved through his free and infinite grace. After Dr. Dewar,[1] Mr. Middleton of Strathmiglo, and Mr. Somerville,[2] had preached at the tent, I was called again to preach the evening sermon there at seven o'clock, while Mr. Rose did so in the church. The subject was Isaiah liv. 10, 'The mountains shall depart,' &c.; and I was so much assisted both in exposition and exhortation, that there was visible among the people a far greater awakening than during any part of the day. We continued together till between nine and ten, the moon being full and the sky unclouded, though the mist began to settle in the hollow in which the tent was placed. After we had gone home, my father and Mr. Rose not having yet come in, it struck me, while at tea, that we ought to have a meeting still in the church, and continue all night in prayer to God for the outpouring of the Spirit. Some objected, but Charles Brown[3] was completely on my side, saying that he was put in mind of that occasion on which the friends of Jesus sought to lay hold of him, saying, 'He is beside himself;' and accordingly we again repaired to the church, where many were already assembled joining in prayer with Mr. Martin of Bathgate and Mr. Middleton, and after the bell had been rung and the church was filled, Charles J. Brown sang and spoke upon a part of Psalm lxxii., and then prayed. When he had concluded, Mr. Martin spoke on Psalm xiv. to those still unawakened, and engaged in prayer according to concert specially for the same class. Mr. Somerville then addressed the awakened, but not yet converted, from the account of the conversion of Saul, and afterwards prayed for them as Mr. Martin had before done for the others. I was then called in conclusion to speak more generally to all, and did so at considerable length and very calmly from the first four verses of the 116th Psalm, which having been sung the whole was concluded with prayer. We separated from this most precious meeting, in which not a few were awakened, at three A.M. of Monday, and after leaving the church Mr. Somerville and I were forced to remain in the session-house with the distressed, instructing and praying till between five and six o'clock, when we went home to rest. The cases in the session-house were numerous and very interesting.

---

[1] The Rev. Dr. Thomas Guthrie, then of St. John's Parish, afterwards of St. John's Free Church, Edinburgh.

---

[1] Principal of Marischal College, Aberdeen.

[2] Of Anderston Church, Glasgow.

[3] The Rev. Dr. C. J. Brown, then of New North Parish, now of New North Free Church, Edinburgh.

"*September* 23*d.*—Having risen from a refreshing sleep at twelve noon, I was told that I was expected to preach the second sermon about two at the tent. I was counselled by my mother to beware of harsh expressions in preaching and prayer, and told by J. that she thought there was a danger of my losing the former sweetness, as she said, of my manner in preaching for an unpleasant sternness. I thanked the Lord for this counsel, and was told by her afterwards that I had been enabled to correct the fault. There were an immense number of ministers and preachers at the tent on Monday, and I went down under some anxiety, as I had no special preparation. However, I was enabled in private and public prayer to cast myself on the Lord, and he did *not* prove a wilderness to me, a land of darkness, but aided me beyond all my expectations. The text from which I spoke was Ezekiel xxxvi. 26, 'A new heart also will I give you,' and I found so much laid to my hand, both in expounding and applying the subject, that I could hardly get done. There was great attention among the audience, which might amount to two thousand, and blessed be God, some of the ministers present seemed to be convinced that the Lord had helped me to be faithful; Charles J. Brown and John Duncan spoke particularly in this way. In the evening Charles J. Brown preached a most excellent discourse in the church at eight o'clock, from the words in Matthew, 'What do ye more than others?' showing 1st. *Why* Christians might be expected to do more than others, and 2nd.

What more they were expected to do. After he had concluded I felt deeply impressed with the desirableness of continuing in prayer to God, especially with and for the unconverted, whom we were, alas! to leave at the close of this blessed season farther in many cases from Jesus than before. I accordingly proposed to Charles J. Brown that I should ask the unconverted to stay behind, not excluding others who might also desire to do so. He said I should do as I thought best, and accordingly after the praise was ended, I asked those who knew that they were still unconverted to remain, coming down into the front seats below to be addressed and prayed for. My thus assigning them particular seats rather alarmed and staggered Mr. Brown, and, as I afterwards found, my father also and many other of the ministers present; but as no remonstrance was at the time made, and after so many had come forward that the seats were fully occupied, and even —— (a young gentleman from Glasgow whom I had been conversing with a little before under considerable concern about his soul) went into them with a younger brother also much affected, as I noticed, during the sermon, when the love of Christ was spoken of, Mr. Brown's doubts appeared to vanish, and I proceeded, after singing and long-continued prayer, to exhort at great length those in the seats and also the congregation at large to an immediate closing with Christ. In this work I was assisted, I think, as much as ever before in my life, having a degree of tenderness and affection which my hard, hard heart is rarely privileged to feel, and in prayer I was favoured with peculiar nearness to God, insomuch that at one time I felt as if really in contact with the Divine presence, and could hardly go on; while at the same blessed season there seemed to be a general and sweet melting of heart among the audience, and many of the unconverted were weeping bitterly aloud, though I spoke throughout with *perfect calmness* and solemnity. We separated between one and two o'clock from this the last, and I think, without doubt, the most eminently blessed part of the whole communion season, at least in as far as I was a witness to it. After the meeting had broken up many went to the session-house, where my father had been with not a few in distress during the greater part of the meeting, and then he and Mr. Rose continued for several hours longer, witnessing, as they told us when they came home, the most wonderful displays of the Holy Spirit's work."

"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." The rest of the history, so far as it can be written or read in this world, is soon told. The high spring-tide of exalted feeling, necessarily mingled more or less with mere sympathetic excitement, gradually passed away, and the currents alike of religious experience and of ordinary human life flowed once more in their customary channels. There were some temporary professors, there were some "imperfect conversions," there were some whose bright early promise, though not wholly darkened, did not shine forth with an altogether unclouded lustre "more and more unto the perfect day;" but there were very many to whose shining consistency and purity, and steadfast perseverance to the end, declared plainly that they had been with Jesus, and that in that terrible moment of their soul's agony they had been indeed born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The history of the Kilsyth revival, in short, as of every other true revival, whether ushered in by the earthquake and the whirlwind or by the still small voice, had in truth been written eighteen hundred years before by Him who knoweth the end from the beginning: "Behold, a sower went forth to sow; and when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up: some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth; and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth; and when the sun was up, they were scorched; and, because they had no root, they withered away; and some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up and choked them: *but other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.*"

CHAPTER V.

1839.

ST. PETER'S, DUNDEE.

The reader will have seen that in turning aside to refer to the second communion at Kilsyth, and thus bring into one view the history of the remarkable movement there, we have necessarily anticipated somewhat the actual course of events in Mr. Burns' life. He returned to Dundee on the 8th of August, and almost immediately on his arrival found himself in the midst of scenes essentially similar to, and scarcely less remarkable than those he had left behind. To quote again his own words, in the letter to Mr. M'Cheyne referred to above:—

"I left Dundee upon Tuesday the 16th July, intending to return to it on the 24th after attending at the communion, which was to be dispensed at Kilsyth on the 21st of that month. But the marvellous outpouring of the Spirit of God which was witnessed on Tuesday the 23d, having made it appear to many inexpedient for me to leave so soon that favoured parish, I remained there for a fortnight longer, and only returned to Dundee upon Wednesday, the 8th of August. In my absence, Mr. Lyon, missionary at Banton, in the parish of Kilsyth, came over to Dundee and officiated for me; and I found on my return, as was natural, that the accounts which had been brought to them by Mr. Lyon of what he had witnessed on that ever-memorable Tuesday at Kilsyth, together with the fact of my being detained from returning to them in consequence of being employed as an instrument in the Lord's work in another place, had produced so deep an impression as seemed eminently to prepare the way for the commencement of a similar work among themselves. However I cannot say that I returned to Dundee with this distinct expectation; which I was in some degree kept from entertaining by a full conviction that the work at Kilsyth was almost entirely dependent for its origin *on the prayers of God's people there*, which had been for some time incessant and most fervent; and that it was in *a very inferior degree*, indeed, connected with any particular instrument employed in preaching the gospel. I entertained, perhaps, less hope of an outpouring of the Spirit on the people at my return, also, because I was inclined to think, as other people thought, that I must be exhausted by the incessant labours of the preceding fortnight, and I had rather the idea of taking rest on my return, than of then beginning and from that time continuing to labour day by day as constantly and in the same glorious and blessed work as I had been engaged in at Kilsyth. With this idea of taking relaxation uppermost in my mind I met for but a short time, on the evening of the Wednesday on which I arrived, with the young men's class, and dismissed them without any particular indication of the Divine presence with us, and on the Thursday I requested my kind friend Mr. L——, of the Seamen's Chapel, to add to his many former favours by taking my place at the prayer-meeting in the evening. This he did with his usual readiness, and all went on as usual, until, just before the meeting closed, I rose to say a very few words to the people on my return to them, and regarding the marvellous work which had keep me so long away. I felt in speaking, at this time, powerfully impressed with the necessity of improving this, the very best opportunity of seeking to awaken the many sleeping sinners among them to an immediate concern about their perishing state, and to urge them to an instant acceptance of the Lord Jesus. Under this impression, which came with unusual power upon my own soul, while for a few minutes I addressed them, I intimated that, after the blessing was pronounced, I would willingly wait a little longer with any who either knew that they had not been yet converted, or were not sure that they had, in order that I might give them counsel from the Word of God suited to such a state, and might especially join with them in pleading for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to convert them all to the Lord Jesus. In consequence of this intimation about a hundred, I should think, remained behind; and Mr. L—— having retired I proceeded to speak to them from a passage of Scripture upon the awful state of unconverted sinners, and the duty of instantly obeying the Divine command by 'believing on the Lord Jesus Christ that they might be saved;' entreating them on no account whatever to leave the church until they had fled to Jesus from the wrath to come. As far as I can recollect, both in speaking and hearing we felt more than usually the unspeakable solemnity of our position; and in prayer there was a far greater degree than, perhaps, I had ever seen among them of the spirit of Jacob's resolution, 'I will not let thee go until thou bless me.' Some were in tears, and all appeared to be seeking the Lord with real earnestness of soul. After the blessing had been again pronounced, I suppose about half-past ten o'clock, a considerable number lingered in the passage, even after the lights had been put out, apparently anxious to catch any additional word that might be said in retiring; and when I began to say a few things in passing to the vestry about the work at Kilsyth, and the hardness of *their* hearts in resisting the Spirit of God, on a sudden the power of God seemed to descend upon almost all present, and they were in a moment bathed in a flood of tears such as I had never witnessed among them before. It put me in vivid remembrance of the scenes which I had left, and I was at that moment inflamed with the desire, and elated with the expectation of seeing a similar revelation of the right hand of Jehovah in Dundee as in Kilsyth. I called on Mr. T——, who was standing beside me, to pray, and before we parted I intimated that next night there would be another prayer-meeting, that we might wait upon the Lord 'until the Spirit should be poured out upon us from on high.' On Friday night accordingly, at the usual hour, although it was but very partially known that there was to be a meeting, more than the usual number assembled, and Mr. Baxter of Hiltown, an excellent and trustworthy fellow-labourer, went through the usual services and concluded the meeting at the ordinary hour, without anything remarkable occurring, except that, before the blessing was pronounced, I again invited the same class to remain behind as had remained the night before. There might now be present from 150 to 200; but this number gradually increased while we remained together, by persons who were attracted by seeing the church lighted at so unusual an hour as our meeting extended to. In speaking to them again, and in praying with and for them, I felt more than ever I had done before, except at Kilsyth, the presence of the Holy Spirit constraining me as it were to plead with God and with man. At one time, while I was pressing the Lord Jesus on them all, and beseeching them in the name of Christ 'to be reconciled to God,' the whole audience seemed to be bathed in tears; and one or two persons, who had been convicted of sin under your own ministry, and had frequently conversed with me about the state of their souls, were so overpowered by their feelings that they cried aloud for mercy to the Lord. In prayer also immediately after this the same tender frame appeared to increase upon the people, insomuch that at half-past eleven, while Mr. Baxter and I felt it our duty to conclude the meeting, we felt equally called on to allow any of those present who might desire it, an opportunity of still meeting us in the vestry. Mr. Baxter and I accordingly adjourned to the vestry; and I think I never can forget what I saw when we opened the door to admit those that might wish to see us. They seemed all to be pressing towards the door like a pent-up flood, and when it was opened they rushed in like the same flood when it has burst its barrier and carried all before it. They pushed forward with breathless anxiety, and their tears literally streaming from their eyes, and some of them like persons who had been seized with a frenzy. One young man in particular (the very individual that I had seen weeping in the male class on the night before I went away to Kilsyth) screamed out and gasped as if for breath, so that J—— W—— had to hold him with another man in his arms for half-an-hour, and when we proposed to pray, all, as if seized with one impulse, threw themselves on the ground, groaning, weeping, and crying for Jesus to come and save them. When too we sung the 45th Psalm, and particularly the verse 'Thine arrows sharply pierce the hearts,' &c., the souls of all seemed so much on fire that one man present said to me afterwards, 'he had heard singing often, but such singing as there was *then* he never heard.' After Mr. Baxter and I had prayed and spoken with them until half-past one o'clock we dismissed them to their own houses, Mr. Baxter kindly agreeing to come back on Saturday night and assist me again at a prayer-meeting which, at the *special* request of the people, we had intimated before leaving the church. At this meeting, which was larger than the one on the preceding night, Mr. Baxter first, and then I, officiated. The people seemed to be much in the same frame as on the preceding night; and so strong did the call appear to be to remain among them, that we both stayed until the Sabbath morning had arrived with those who, as on the preceding evenings, had remained behind after the blessing was pronounced. On the following day I preached with more than usual liberty, though I had almost no time to do more than choose the subjects on which I was to speak; and I felt much more of the presence of the Holy Spirit breathing with quickening power upon my own soul, than I had ever experienced in your pulpit before. I had intended in the afternoon, in order to make a grand onset upon the hosts of the enemy, to extend the same plan to the Sabbath congregation which I had followed at the prayer-meetings on the days past, by inviting all the unconverted to remain behind, after the congregation at large had been dismissed. However, the hour being late, I invited the same class to meet me in the church at seven o'clock, when I made it known that any other persons might also attend, whatever was their state. So strongly also did I feel the necessity of continued public as well as private prayer, in order to obtain the plenteous effusion of the Holy Ghost, that I intimated public prayer-meetings for *every night* during the following week. In the evening all went on as usual, while I addressed inquirers from the account of the penitent woman in Luke vii. 36–52, and conducted the other ordinary services. However, after the blessing had been pronounced, and, after waiting long in the pulpit, I was on my way to the vestry, a great many of the people still kept their seats, as if resolved to wait for that blessing from the Lord which they had asked, but had not as yet received. I could not leave them in such an interesting state, though no doubt my strength was by this time considerably exhausted; and accordingly I returned to the precentor's desk, and having sung a Psalm, I called on our dear brother Mr. C—— to pray and read a chapter. He did so most suitably, adding a few observations at my request upon part of the 15th of Luke, the passage which he had read. After he had ended I felt still called on to continue with the people in prayer, and also to direct and exhort those that were seeking after Christ, which I did chiefly from the 53d of Isaiah. The state of the people, who might amount at least to several hundreds, was much the same as on the preceding evenings. The greater part were in tears, and many were almost overcome, either by the agony of conviction, or a transporting sense of the love of God in Christ. It was about twelve o'clock when this glorious meeting ended; and though I had been speaking for an unusual length of time, and in unusually exciting circumstances, I felt in no degree more exhausted at night than in the morning; and enjoyed when I came home, as I have done throughout the whole of this wonderful period, sweeter and more refreshing rest than I had been accustomed to have before. When I opened my Bible on Monday morning my eyes rested, much to my surprise, on the words of the Lord to Paul—Acts xviii. 9-11—and truly I was not without the need of some such supporting assurance of the Lord's favour in the work on which I had entered; for the whole city was in an uproar, many saying, and perhaps some believing, that the people and I had gone mad; while few even of the people of God, except those who had been present (none of them felt thus), seemed to sympathize in what was going on, and some even charged me with fanaticism and an unintentional effort to ruin the interests of vital godliness in the city. However I have never been allowed, though I am by no means naturally of a courageous temper, either then or since, to entertain the least shadow of a doubt regarding the propriety of any step which I have been led to take in this matter, and I felt, especially at that time, that though many to whom I might look for aid should stand back, or even take part with the world, it was my duty like a soldier who has got some important post from his general to defend, rather to die in fighting to maintain it than to yield it to the enemy. Accordingly on Monday and Tuesday nights, being deprived of the presence of Mr. Baxter, who was obliged to go to Edinburgh that week, as a member of the Commission of Assembly, I conducted the public meetings alone. . . . On Thursday my dear friend James Hamilton, son of the late Dr. Hamilton of Strathblane, came in from Abernyte, where he is assistant, and conducted most of the services. On Friday and Saturday I was again alone; but never felt that my strength was inadequate for all that I was left to do. During this whole week the meetings were crowded nearly to suffocation, and after all hundreds went away without gaining admittance. Curiosity and even worse motives no doubt attracted the great body of these assemblies; but many who came to mock remained to pray, and more who were drawn by the mere desire to see something new and strange, saw nothing new that was remarkable, but heard the old gospel as if they had heard it for the first time, no longer 'as a tale that is told,' but as glorious tidings for guilty and ruined sinners. The meetings in general ended about ten o'clock, though I frequently had to meet with inquirers after dismissing, in the vestry, and nothing particular characterized them, but an unusually solemn attention in hearing and earnestness in prayer. I began this week also the plan, which has been continued ever since, of meeting privately in the forenoon any of those who might wish to converse and pray with me regarding their state. Many came from the very first to these private conferences, and I soon obtained evidence, which stands in great part upon record in my note-books, of the reality of the work of God's Spirit among us in convincing men, through the medium of his own Word, of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, which may remove the suspicions of all friends and overthrow the cavils and calumny of all enemies. On Sabbath, the 18th August, we had one of the greatest days of the Lord's power that I have seen in Dundee. On the evening of that day, when I preached from Isaiah liv. 5, 'Thy Maker is thine husband, the Lord of hosts is his name,' several persons sobbed or almost cried aloud; but the impression of the truth of God was so deep on the audience generally that this seemed to be little regarded. A greater number have attributed their awakening to that single discourse than to any other single sermon that I have preached, with the exception of that delivered upon Tuesday, the 23d July, at Kilsyth, by which, in the hand of the almighty Spirit of Jehovah, the whole congregation were, as if by some instantaneous electric shock, in a moment shaken with alarm or transported with divine joy.

"I have given you a specimen, in the first week, of the meetings, which have been continued, with a few exceptions, every day down to the present time. For nearly two months after they began, they continued to be crowded as much as they had been at first; since that time the numbers have been in general smaller, partly on account of the shortness of the days and the darkness of the nights keeping back many that were accustomed to come from a distance, and partly also, no doubt, from the falling away of many who came at first from improper motives, and did not receive such benefit during their attendance as to make them continue it from better reasons. At first, as I have already told you, many of the people of God, and not a few ministers, including even some of the very best, were suspicious of the work, or even openly opposed; now, however, while men of the world are probably as much opposed to it as ever, the church of God among us is much more visibly separated from the world by its almost unanimous testimony in its favour. . . .

"And now, dearly beloved brother and fellow-labourer, at the very time that I am about to enter, in answer to your most judicious queries, upon the most inviting part of this region, through the most rugged part of which I have been trying hastily to drag you, I find that my time is *more* than gone, and that I must leave those results to your own observation and to oral communication, of which I could have wished, had time permitted, to give you a general sketch. In a word, several hundreds at least are awakened, belonging to all classes of the community, and to all denominations of Christians, though, of course, a greater number belong to your own congregation and parish than to any other single section of the city or surrounding country. All the awakened, as far as I know, are making most satisfactory progress. Many of them are rejoicing in the Lord Jesus, and not a few of them are, I believe, adorning the doctrine of God their Saviour by a life and conversation becoming the gospel, &c."

The scenes at Kilsyth, in short, were in every essential particular repeated here, allowing only for the difference between a quiet country village and a large and busy manufacturing town. The crowded and solemnized assemblies in the church from night to night for months together; the eager throngs of inquirers, sometimes so numerous as to form themselves a congregation; the varied and weighty instructions of ministers, followed generally by more special counsels and prayers for those whose overmastering anxiety constrained them to remain behind; the numberless prayer-meetings of old and young, in private rooms, in workshops, in retired gardens, in open fields; the public challenge to the powers of evil and open assault on their strongholds by sermons and addresses in market-places and public streets or church-yards; the nightly journey of thirsty souls from far distances in the outskirts of the city, and in the rural parishes around; the general sensation and spirit of inquiry—half-serious, half-curious—which pervaded more or less the entire community,—were here as there the salient features of a time which none who lived through it, and entered in any measure into the feeling of it, can ever have forgotten.

In the following exalted strains of adoration and fervent aspiration he closes the record of a week of incessant, but to him delightful labour:—

"20 *minutes to* 12.—When this week is expiring I would again, with praises which must echo through all the arches of heaven, set up my Ebenezer and say, Hitherto the Lord hath helped me! O what a week of mercy and grace and love! Last week was wonderful, this is much more so; what will the next be? Perhaps it may be with Jesus in glory! O that it may at least be with Jesus, and that it may redound to the eternal glory of his grace in me and many thousands of redeemed souls! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly! O scatter the clouds and mists of unbelief which exhale afresh from the stagnant marshes in my natural heart, the habitation of dragons, and pour afresh upon my ransomed soul a full flood of thy divine light and love and joy, in the effulgence of which all sin dies, and all the graces of the Spirit bloom and breathe their fragrance! Nor do I pray for myself alone, but for all my dear friends—father, mother, brothers, and sisters . . . . —for all the people here—all the ministers of every name whom Jesus hath called to preach his gospel, and for all who shall to-morrow hear or read the glad tidings of great joy which shall yet be to all people! Lord, hasten the latter-day glory! Come quickly, and reign without bounds and without end! And now wash me in thy blood, whose price I cannot tell, but need to cleanse me, so great a transgressor am I. Glory to thee, O Lamb of God, and to thee, O Father, and to thee, O Holy Ghost, eternal and undivided! Amen!"

And so from day to day and from week to week the sacred work of this remarkable time went on—the church nightly thronged with arrested and deeply solemnized multitudes, and every other available hour occupied with individual inquirers, who in very deed sought the eternal wisdom "as silver, and searched for her as for hid treasure." Twenty, thirty, forty, would often come to him on this errand in a single day, gathering in little groups in an outer chamber and pouring out their hearts in united prayer, or in silent and solitary breathings, as they waited each their turn for a personal interview. Generally at the public assemblies, a large part of the audience would remain after the regular services were concluded, for further and more special instruction; and even when all was over, often at a late hour, eager groups would still cling around the preacher as he retired to the vestry, in hope of hearing still some last words of parting counsel and prayer. Occasionally even then it was scarcely possible to shake off the importunate crowds who hung upon the lips of Christ's ambassadors as for their lives:—"When we left the session-house," he writes on September 19th, "we met a great multitude still waiting to hear the word, and some of them in tears. Many of these came along with Mr. W—— and me to the west end of the town, and when we came to Roseangle, Mr. W—— at my suggestion engaged with them in a parting prayer on the highway side, under the starlight faintly shining through the dark windy clouds." At one time the throng of worshippers was so great, especially during a visit of Dr. M'Donald of Urquhart, that it was found expedient to change the place of meeting from St. Peter's to St. David's Parish Church, the largest place of worship in Dundee, the use of which was kindly given by the minister, the Rev. George Lewis, who himself took a deep interest and bore an efficient part in the services. The movement may perhaps be said to have reached its climax —a kind of spring-tide flood—at the communion season in October, when the late much esteemed and highly gifted Mr. Bonar of Larbert, assisted by Messrs. Bonar of Kelso, M'Donald of Blairgowrie, and Mr. Flyter of Alness, dispensed the living bread to a vast concourse of hungering souls, "many of whom seemed burning with desire after nearness to Jesus." On the evening of the day three several congregations were assembled—one vast assemblage in the church, and two lesser ones formed out of its overflow in the adjoining school-rooms, and were addressed respectively by Mr. Bonar of Kelso, Mr. Bonar of Larbert, and Mr. Burns. "During the whole of this communion Sabbath," he records in his journal, "there was, I am told by the ministers, an unusually deep solemnity pervading the audience—the result, I trust, of the near presence of Jehovah."

Amidst those solemn scenes Mr. Burns himself remained, in a most remarkable manner, calm and self-possessed. The great objects of faith which so mightily moved his soul, seemed to tranquillize, whilst they solemnized and stirred him, so that he moved from day to day in an element rather only of holy and exalted feeling than of excitement in the ordinary sense of the term. At the close of the most exhausting day of apparently exciting labour, his sleep would be as deep and soft as that of a child, and he arose for the next day's toil fresh and joyful, as a strong man to run his race. "I rose," says he (Sabbath, October 6, 1839), "at half-past nine, and felt very strong, even after the incessant duties of Saturday—so wonderfully does the Lord refresh me with sweet sleep." And again (November 11), "I rose this morning at 11 o'clock!! This appeared to be my duty after being so long and busily engaged on Sabbath. Indeed, it is by sleeping until I am fully refreshed, more than by any other means, that my strength has been preserved undiminished, or rather, I may say, has increased during the excessive labours to which I have been called during the last three and a half months."

In regard to the character of his preaching during this period, it would appear from all I have been able to learn in regard to it, to have been characterized by great fulness, freedom, and rich copiousness of scriptural exposition and appeal, by a melting and persuasive unction, and even by a clearness and force of thought and diction, which, considering the incessant draughts made upon his resources, was very remarkable. At the same time, as he ever sought to speak, not from the mere remembered impression of past convictions, but from the immediate and present sense of eternal things, and felt constrained either to utter only that which he felt livingly in his soul or be silent altogether, his preaching was subject now, as ever afterwards, to great variations alike in fulness and in power.

Amid his engrossing and abundant labours in the field of service specially allotted to him, he found time also for occasional evangelistic excursions to other places, the results of which were sometimes interesting. Thus, instead of returning straight home from the communion at Kilsyth, referred to in last chapter, he made a rapid visit to Paisley, where he preached in the High Church to a densely crowded audience, "with much assistance, from Job xxxiii. 23;" and "saw not a few in tears," as he was himself "considerably moved, not so much when preaching, as when expounding briefly Philippians ii. 5–9." On his way to Paisley an incident occurred which is worth recording, as characteristic alike of the time and of the man:

"*Tuesday, September 24th.*—In the afternoon, when on my way to Paisley, I had hardly seated myself in the Glasgow boat when an acquaintance (John Marshall, Auchinsterrie) said to me, 'You should have worship here.' 'Of course if it is agreeable to all it will be agreeable to me.' All seemed anxious for this, and the next minute the captain came saying, 'Will you allow me to open the steerage door as the passengers there would like to hear?' This of course we gladly agreed to, and in a few minutes I found myself, to my own joyful astonishment, standing at the partition door and praying with the whole company. We also sang more than once; and I would have expounded a passage, but I had a little hoarseness and did not see it to be my duty to expose myself when I had so much of the most important work before me."

The next day he preached in the forenoon at Kirkintilloch, and in the evening at Denny, where we catch a characteristic glimpse of one lofty alike in stature and in moral bearing, whom all who were present at the convocation of the ministers of the Church of Scotland in 1842 will remember as perhaps the most striking figure in that assembly: "There was a most densely crowded audience, to whom I preached with considerable assistance from Romans iii. 19, 22. Having ended at twelve o'clock, Mr. Dempster, who seemed all on fire with earnestness for a blessing on his people, came up and said a few words, adding, that if any still desired to hear more of the gospel, Mr. Duncan[1] would be glad to preach again."

The following extracts, the first of them deeply touching and characteristic, will afford a glimpse of some of his labours elsewhere:—

---

[1] Of Milton Church, Glasgow, late of New College, Edinburgh.

"*Edinburgh, October* 16*th*, 1839.—This forenoon I visited, after seeing several cases privately, the Orphan Hospital, under the government of my dear friend M'Dougall, with whom I one dark evening prayed in Bute upon some lonely rocks by the sea-shore, and a pious matron, Mrs. Dickson. In the governor's room I saw a fine picture of Whitefield, who was a great favourer of this institution, and when I went into the little pulpit of the chapel, saw the dear orphans so neatly clad and so beautifully arranged before me, and began to read Psalm ciii., 'Such pity as a father hath,' &c., I felt quite overpowered by a feeling of sympathy with these dear children in their orphan state, mingled with grateful wonder at the love of God in dealing so kindly with them. In prayer also I had considerable enlargement, but particularly in speaking from 2 Corinthians viii. 9, and telling them some anecdotes, I felt unusually melted myself, and yearned over them, I think, in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Some of the boys and girls were crying, and when I bade them farewell, they unwillingly and with many tears withdrew. O Lord, think upon each of these dear children, convert them all to thyself through Jesus, and raise up from among the boys a great band of holy and devoted ministers and missionaries of Jesus! It was with peculiarly affecting feelings that I hurriedly bade adieu to this most interesting institution, running to be in time to visit, as I had promised, the Greenside Female School, under the conduct of Miss Haldane and other pious ladies.

"*St. Andrews, November* 4*th*.—After visiting Mrs. C——, an interesting Christian widow, who travails in birth again for her children, that Christ may be formed in them, and praying with her and two of her dear children, I went at eleven to Mr. Lothian's; and after he had prayed and said a few words I spoke for a little to about fifty or sixty people from John iv. 10. Many were silently weeping, though, alas! my own hard heart did not feel so tenderly as at some other times. We bade them all farewell at the door, leaving many in tears as we went into the curricle that was to convey us back to Dundee. On our way

James H. and I both prayed and had much conversation about the glorious work in which we were engaged, the hopeful symptoms of an approaching revival in St. Andrews, and the necessity of making *full* proof of our ministry, taking up our cross and following Jesus whithersoever he goeth. There are a few names even in this poor desolate place that have not defiled their garments, and who begin to take pleasure in the stones of Zion and to favour her very dust. O Lord! do thou appear in thy glory among them, and turn all their hearts as the heart of one man to thyself. Father, glorify thy Son; glorify thine own name. Amen.

"O Lord Jehovah! grant to me a heart for Jesus' sake to praise thee with becoming love for all the most marvellous displays of thy love and mercy which I the chief of sinners am permitted to behold from day to day. Breathe on me, O Holy Ghost! for the glory of Emmanuel, and fill my soul with seraphic love, and my tongue with holy and unceasing praise, and O! draw by thy omnipotent grace all these dear inquiring souls to the blood and the bosom of that adorable Emmanuel whom they seek after, and whom thou camest to glorify in the hearts of sinners. Amen."

On Thursday, November 23, Mr. M'Cheyne returned from the interesting mission which had led to Mr. Burns' temporary occupancy of his pastoral charge, and from that time accordingly his official connection with St. Peter's Church and congregation closed. The following extracts will show the feelings with which he ended this first, and in some respects most eventful period of his home ministry, and the tender bond of sacred affection which still, in parting, bound him alike to that people and their pastor:

"*Sabbath, November* 17*th*, 1839.—. . . In applying the subject I was remarkably aided, and just as I was concluding it came into my mind that though I might probably preach to the people again, yet that *now* I had reached the termination of my ministry, and this gave me an affecting topic from which to press home the message more urgently (subject, 'Union to Christ,' John xv.)

The season was indeed one that I shall never forget. Before me there was a crowd of immortal souls all hastening to eternity, some to heaven, and many I fear to hell, and I was called to speak to them, as it were, for the last time, to press Jesus on them, and to beseech them to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son. . . . After I had intimated that Mr. M'Cheyne was expected to be here on Thursday, I spoke a few words on my leaving them, but I was so much affected that I could say but little, and I felt that it was a cause of praise that the Lord hid from me so much of what is affecting in my present circumstances, though I believe it were good both for the people and myself to feel this much more. The people retired very slowly when we had dismissed about five o'clock, and many waited in the passage and in the gallery until I retired, who wept much when I was passing along, and obliged me to pray with them in the passage again. When I came out I met with many of the same affecting tokens of the reality of my approaching separation from a people among whom the Lord, in his sovereign and infinite mercy, has shown me the most marvellous proofs of his covenant love, and from among whom, I trust, he has taken, during my continuance among them, not a few jewels to shine for ever in the crown of Emmanuel the Redeemer! 'Glory to the Lamb that was slain!'

. . . . Truly the work of the Lord is marvellous when I begin to look back upon it from the beginning. It must engage my harp and my tongue, with those of countless multitudes of the redeemed in glory, throughout the endless ages of eternity.

"*Friday, November 23d*, 1839.—. . . . I met Mr. M'Cheyne at his own house at half-past six, and had a sweet season of prayer with him before the hour of the evening meeting. We went both into the pulpit; and after he had sung and prayed shortly, I conducted the remaining services, speaking from 2 Samuel xxiii. 1–5, and concluding at ten. We went to his house together and conversed a considerable time about many things connected with the work of God, and his and my own future plans and prospects. I find he preached to a densely crowded audience on Thursday night, and with a very deep impression, from 'I am determined to know nothing among you,' &c. He seems in but weak health, and not very sanguine about ever resuming the full duties of a parish minister. O Lord, spare thy servant, if it be for the glory of thy name, and restore his full strength that he may yet be the means of winning many souls for Jesus. Amen."

CHAPTER VI.

1839–40.

ST. ANDREWS, PERTH, &c.

With the return of Mr. M'Cheyne, Mr. Burns' stated labours at Dundee necessarily came to a close, and though the somewhat delicate state of his friend's health still for a season rendered his assistance in pastoral work more or less needful, his movements became henceforth of a more varied and desultory kind. On the 27th he was at Abernyte, of which his endeared friend Mr. Hamilton was then the assistant minister, where he addressed a crowded audience from the words, "God so loved the world," &c. "The people seemed much solemnized, and at the close a few were shedding silent tears. Mr. Wilson, the old minister, stayed till near the end (about twelve o'clock), and seemed much interested; and dear James Hamilton, who I think is decidedly growing in grace, spoke to the people a little towards the end in a very close and affecting way." From thence he proceeded to Bridge of Earn, where, though he complained that he "did not feel particularly assisted in preaching, and was much humbled, on coming out, from a view of his own want of simple and supreme desire for the divine glory," he enjoyed much the congenial society of the minister, Mr. Cumming, and rejoiced to hear of some hopeful tokens of a coming blessing on his field of labour. "Pray on," Mr. Somerville had said at the close of the communion services the week before, "and you will soon have a revival here." Next morning he was in Perth, and had his first sight of a field already white unto the harvest, and in which he was soon to spend many a day of abounding but delightful labour:

"*Friday, November 29th*, 1839.—I had intended to leave Perth this morning by ten o'clock, but was prevailed on by Miss M——, whom I saw at the Bridge of Earn, to think of remaining till four P.M., and then thought I might as well stay all night and preach among them; accordingly I came to Perth at one o'clock, and having met Andrew Gray at Mrs. M——'s, where I took up my lodging, it was agreed that I should preach in his church at seven o'clock. Some men were accordingly sent round to give intimation, and short and partial as the notice was, the church was crowded, and hundreds went away who could not get admittance. I preached from Job xxxiii. 24, and had unusual liberty throughout. We did not separate till near eleven, and I am persuaded that had I had time to wait there were not a few who were in deep anxiety about their souls; as it was, two men and four or five women came up after me to the vestry under deep concern.

"*Saturday, November 30th*, 1839.—I this morning met at breakfast Andrew Gray and Mr. Milne, who has just been settled in St. Leonard's Church, and with them I walked about on the quay for a considerable time waiting for the boat, which was considerably behind her time owing to the flood in the river, and had much interesting conversation. Both of these dear friends, but especially Mr. Milne, seem deeply anxious for a stirring among the dry bones in poor Perth, where they are very many and very dry, and both kindly pressed me to come back to them soon."

He returned to Dundee, but only on his way to St. Andrews, to which he had been strongly urged to return with the view of following up the impression created at his first visit, and where he again preached to immense audiences, and with very marked tokens of the divine blessing, both in the parish church and Independent chapel.

"To many," says an old disciple, whose name will long be fragrant in the city and neighbourhood of St. Andrews, "that season, I trust, was the birth-time of their souls, and to believers a time of great revival and refreshment. To *me*, it was a feast of fat things, and I trust of great blessing. Certainly I never heard the gospel message so clearly preached, so unfettered, so unbeclouded; and as faith cometh by hearing, so faith came to my soul, and, out of obscurity, I saw and felt the love of God in a way so melting and so overflowing as to make me weep. May I never lose the impression produced by that sermon from these words: 'He that believeth doth enter into *rest;*' and another also from Mr. Wight—'Hold fast the beginning of your confidence steadfast unto the end.' What an exhibition of the fulness and freeness and completeness of salvation to the believing soul! 'Doubting Castle' was quite demolished; every chain struck off; closed lips opened to shout for joy, and sing praise to our redeeming God." . . .

On the 6th December he expresses himself as "in great difficulty in knowing my own duty—whether to remain steadily in Dundee, or to visit it only among the many places which seem at present ripe for the harvest." In the meantime, however, he continues his evangelistic excursions, guided simply by the calls which immediately pressed upon him, and having no other plan than that of doing what his hand found to do, and doing it with his might. The next entry is interesting, as illustrating the manner in which he unweariedly sought to sow the precious seed beside all waters, scarcely ever losing an opportunity of speaking a word in behalf of his Master wherever there was a human ear to hear it, whether in the house or by the way, on the top of a coach, on the deck or cabin of a boat, or to the random travellers on a country road. Instances of this occur perpetually, and in every variety of circumstances, in his journal, and give, perhaps more than anything else in his life and ministry, the impression of one who lived for nothing else but to serve and glorify Christ. It is touching often to mark how eagerly and thankfully he hailed such opportunities, not as calls to the discharge of a difficult duty, but as special tokens of the divine mercy and favour towards himself. To give him the liberty of conducting divine worship and delivering the message of grace, at any time or in any place where a few immortal souls were gathered together, was to lay him under the deepest of all obligations. Thus no one who ever spent the briefest time alone with him, or even met him casually by the way, could for a moment doubt that in the truest and fullest sense to him "to live was Christ."

"*Thursday, December 5th*, 1839.—I this day went by coach from Dundee to Cumbernauld. . . . At Cumbernauld I left the coach, after giving tracts to all on it and in it (a practice which I intend to follow wherever I go, as eminently calculated to advance the salvation of souls), and walked over the hill towards Kilsyth. I first made up to two boys going home from school, who seemed very ignorant of Jesus. I spoke to them, gave them tracts, and shortly prayed with them on the road. I next met Mr. Lusk going home, with whom I also prayed on the road. At the Craigmarloch Bridge I met widow Mitchell and her daughter Agnes, an old school companion of my own. With them I prayed—going for a little into the house. At home I found all well, my father absent at the presbytery, and expected to return in the evening with some minister to officiate in the evening meeting. This duty, however, was devolved upon me. . . . I preached from Ephesians v. 1, chiefly seeking the edification of those lately converted to the Lord. During the service my father and Dr. Smyth[1] of Glasgow came in. It was delightful indeed for me to meet, after the congregation dismissed, with many of the dear lambs of Jesus' fold, who appeared to be growing in faith and love both towards Jesus and towards each other. All the road home was strewed with little groups of these dear believers waiting to welcome me back among them and receive some word of exhortation.

"*Tuesday, December* 10*th*, 1839.— . . . Preached to the dear Kilsyth flock in the evening from John xv. 1, 2. . . . I had in the afternoon of this day several very interesting conversations with particular individuals—as widow Miller, a remarkable old woman, who was converted on Monday evening, July 29th, in the meal-market, while I was speaking after Mr. Somerville had concluded. She appears to be making marvellous progress in the knowledge and love of Emmanuel; and being naturally of a superior cast of mind, she makes the most beautiful and striking remarks. She said, for instance, 'Oh! you must rouse them, you must rouse them to-night, just as a mason drives his chisel with his mell upon the stones. And are we not all stones—rough stones, till God hew and polish us? You roused them before, just as if you were to put a cold hand on a man's warm face.' She said also to a poor old beggar, 'Oh! you must be made new Robby; it's old Robby with you yet. I was old Betty, but I am new Betty now; and you must pour out your old heart before the Lord and get a new one,' &c."

After brief visits to Bo'ness, Dunfermline, and other places by the way, he reached Dundee once more on the 23d, and thence proceeded two days after to Perth, in which he was to find his chief scene of labour for several months to come.

The nature of the field on which he now entered, as well as the character of him with whom especially it was his lot there to labour, will be familiar to very many of my readers from the admirable memoir of Mr. Milne, lately given to the world by Dr. Horatius Bonar. He was indeed "a man greatly beloved," and a true and worthy "yoke-fellow" of the subject of these pages throughout the whole course of those memorable days. Of one mind and of one heart, of differing gifts, but of equal devotedness and singleness of purpose in the service of Christ, they fought the good fight side by side, without a dream of personal rivalry, or any other thought whatever, but that of "striving together for the faith of the gospel." It was especially admirable to mark the perfect self-abnegation with which the young and gifted pastor saw his work, as it were, for the moment taken out of his hands ere ever he had almost entered on it; and rejoiced in the fruit of his brother's labours even as though it were his own, content either to thrust in his own sickle or to see the harvest reaped by another hand, so only the Master's garner were filled. Closely linked together in life, in affection, and in sympathy, it was interesting to many also to notice that in death they were not long divided, having been called to their eternal rest within a few weeks of one another, and both at a comparatively early age, having lived much and long in a little time.

---

[1] Minister of St. George's Parish, Glasgow.

The rapid and pregnant brevity of the first notices of Mr. Burns' labours here indicate at once the remarkable power with which the sacred movement set in almost from the first day of his arrival on the scene, and the incessant and absorbing occupation which in consequence devolved upon him. His days and nights were so filled up with acts, and with those intense exercises of soul which are the living breath of acts, that he had little time either to narrate or describe:—

"*Sabbath, December 29th*, 1839, forenoon.—Preached in East Church, Dr. Esdaile's. I was not left to myself, I hope. Subject, Isaiah xlii. 21; time too short to allow of sufficient fulness: church full—the gay people of Perth; the magistrates present. Afternoon, St. Leonard's, great crowd; subject, conversion, Matthew xviii. 3; more aided than ever before on this text, I think; solemnity deep. Inquirers invited to meet at seven in the evening, and at one P.M. on Monday. Evening: about one hundred and fifty were present. The Lord was very near. . . . We had to continue together till about eleven o'clock. . . . This was a meeting very similar to some of the Lord's most gracious visits at Kilsyth and Dundee. Praise and glory to his matchless name!

"*December* 31*st*, 1839, forenoon.—Meeting at one; a few hundreds present. Mr. Cumming, who had promptly answered our call for aid, began. I then followed upon Psalm cx. 3; a solemn meeting; when it was ended the vestry was filled with weepers, with whom we had to pray and sing a long time. Evening in Mr. Turnbull's church, at seven o'clock; subject, Matthew xi. 28; dense crowd. Meeting at ten o'clock in St. Leonard's Church, to bring in the New Year. We all took part in the service—Mr. Cumming first, Mr. Milne second, and myself third; we separated about one o'clock on the New Year's morning—a sweet season. I never brought in the New Year so sweetly before.

"*Friday*, *January* 3*d*, 1840.—Meeting in the forenoon in Kinnoul Street Church, Mr. Bonar of Collace present, and officiated along with Mr. Milne, Mr. Turnbull, and myself. We met with many interesting cases in the vestry. I went off to Dundee at four o'clock, and left Mr. Bonar to officiate in the evening. He preached to a most densely crowded audience in St. Leonard's Church, from the Ethiopian eunuch; Mr. Milne also spoke; and it is said to have been a most solemn season—not a few in tears."

Prayer, temptation, and deep humiliation of soul, as usual, prepared the way for more abounding joy and strength:—

"*Friday*, *January* 10*th*, 1840.—In the evening I spoke from Romans v. 1, but felt much straitened, and was so filled with self-complacency, vain elation, and spiritual blindness, that I had to stop in a very short time, and felt called on to tell the people that I believed, and had been made to feel for some days, that unless we were humbled under God's mighty hand, and the people ceased from their idolatrous confidence in instruments and looked more to God alone, I was convinced his work would not go on, &c.

"*Saturday, January* 11*th*, 1840.—I was alone during the greater part of the day seeking humiliation before the Lord, and began through grace to discover how far, alas! I have fallen from that contrition of soul for sin which I once enjoyed. Lord, I am indeed set in slippery places. Lord, humble me and keep me from falling into the snare of the devil!

"*Sabbath, January* 12*th*, 1840, afternoon.—Preached in Mr. Gray's from Romans xii. 1, with some degree of brokenness of heart and comfort in the Lord. Evening, preached in Dr. Findlay's from Ephesians iv. 30, on the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a solemn season, an immense assembly. I had great liberty, especially in pressing sinners not to resist the Holy Ghost. Dr. Findlay was with me in the pulpit. . . ."

Here, as elsewhere, and perhaps even more than often elsewhere, he was, in the most emphatic sense, instant in season and out of season, never deeming any place or time unsuitable in which a word might be spoken for his Master, and an effort made to win the life of souls. The highways and hedges, the river steamboat, the roadside inn, the mart of business, the purlieus and haunts of vice and crime, were to him, equally with the crowded church or upper chamber, the fit arena in which to fulfil his divine ambassadorship, and "compel men to come in" to the house of God. The following incident is strikingly illustrative of this, as well as of the pervasive influence of the movement in the Perth community at this time, and the unlikely quarters into which it found its way:—

"*January* 16*th*, 1840.—Coming out I saw behind a public-house some men and women sporting themselves, and went up and said, 'You are making work for the day of judgment.' They all ran in except one young man, a son of the housekeeper; he was subdued. I asked him if he would allow me to go in and pray. I got into a large room; many assembled, and we had a very solemn meeting. They all promised to come out to the meetings at parting."

The sequel appears in a brief entry about a fortnight after:—

"*January* 30*th*, 1840.—When I went home Mr. Milne told me he had heard that Mr. L., the public-house keeper, in whose house I was so remarkably led in God's providence to hold a meeting, had given intimation to his landlord that he was going to give up his shop at the next term, and to leave the spirit-trade. . . . Praise to the Lord!"

The power indeed that attended his words, and the effects which often in the most unexpected quarters followed them, was at this time most remarkable. "I never thought," exclaimed a strong, careless man who had heard him, "to have been so much affected; it is surely something altogether unearthly that has come to the town." Another "had come with a companion to our meetings one night to mock, and they both did so, and went from the church to a public-house. However he would not go in, refusing with an awful oath to do so. On his death-bed he called for his companion, and asked him if he remembered these things. He replied he did. 'Well,' he says, 'I would give a thousand worlds to-night that my soul were in the state his is.' He died after he said these words!"

On Sabbath the 19th he was at the communion at Dundee, when he had the solemn joy of sitting down at the table of the Lord, 'along with many dear believers, not a few of them his own children in the Lord," but immediately afterwards returned to his work in Perth, which seemed still steadily to grow in depth and wide-spread influence:—

"*Sabbath, February* 9*th*, 1840, afternoon.—Preached in Mr. Turnbull's to a crowded audience, from John iii. 14, 15. I felt under the bonds of unbelief during the chief part of the discourse, but towards the close was enabled by the Lord fairly to break loose and speak with some degree of faith and joy in Emmanuel, especially when insisting on the stronger grounds for faith in our case than in the case of the Israelites. They were called to look to a piece of brass as a saviour, and thus their looking was an act simply based on the divine *word;* but we are called by the same divine word to look for life not to an object of no intrinsic power or value, but to the most glorious Object in the universe, the Son of God purchasing the church on the cross with his own blood, &c. I saw several persons in tears; I was weeping myself, and found this a blessed time. Praise to the Lord!—Evening: the crowd was so great seeking to get into St. Leonard's Church, that it was supposed there were more collected in the street an hour before the time than would have several times filled the church. The press was so great when the doors were opened, that several persons were somewhat injured. I preached from Romans x. 4, and felt considerably aided; though to myself the season was not quite so sweet as in the afternoon. We prayed particularly for the raising up of Jewish missionaries, according to the call of the Jewish Committee by circular, and prayed that some of those present, if it were the Lord's will, might be called to this glorious work.

Monday, February 10th, 1840 (day of Queen Victoria's marriage).—Evening: there was to be a grand display of fireworks on the Inch, and we hardly thought that the church would be anything like filled. However, it was quite full, and after a time not a few were standing. I spoke upon the 45th Psalm, commenting on the glory of the Bridegroom Emmanuel, and the privileges of the Bride the Lamb's wife, and thus enforcing the divine call, 'Hearken, O daughter, and consider,' &c. I felt much of the Lord's presence, and had a full persuasion from the frame of the hearers that some, if not many, were in the act of being betrothed to Christ for ever in righteousness, and judgment, and lovingkindness, &c., Hosea ii.; and while we were thus celebrating in the British dominions the marriage of our beloved sovereign, I trust there was joy in the presence of the angels of God over sinners espoused to the Lamb. How infinitely does the one event transcend the other in importance and glory! and yet, alas! this poor world, blinded by Satan, extols the one and despises the other. . . . Awake, O gracious Lord, awake this sleeping world! Amen.

"*March 1st*, 1840.—We had this day a solemn fast—kept by many, I have no doubt, very strictly, as far as the duty of abstinence is concerned. We met at two o'clock P.M. I spoke upon the exercises appropriate to this day:—

"1. Self-examination in order to the discovery of sin—of the heart and nature as well as of the tongue and life—by the law and the Spirit of Jehovah. 2. Humbling the soul before God under sins discovered. 3. Confession of sin, full and particular, free and filial. 4. Penitent turning from all sin. 5. Entering into the covenant of grace by the receiving of Emmanuel and the surrender of the soul to him and to God through him. 6. Special prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon this city, and the other places united with us in this fast—the great end designed in its appointment. There was very great solemnity.—Evening: we met again in Mr. Turnbull's church, Kinnoul Street, and concluded the subject. I had at this time more melting of heart under a sense of the love of God than ever I remember to have had in the pulpit, and I think shed more tears than ever before in preaching. The people also seemed in an unusually tender and solemn frame. Glory to the Lamb!"

Amid these abounding and exhausting labours in a sphere in which so wide and effectual a door had been opened to him, he still found time and strength for occasional evangelistic excursions amid the villages around, the results of which were often deeply interesting. In this way he visited at different times during this period the parishes of Auchtermuchty, Strathmiglo, Dunfermline, Muthil, Stanley, Auchtergaven, Caputh, Kinfauns, &c.

The period of his continuous ministry in Perth was now drawing to a close. He had received repeated and urgent invitations to visit Aberdeen, the scene of his second home, and of his college days, which he was unable any longer to resist, and he felt at the same time that he had already remained in Perth long enough to fulfil the functions of a distinctively evangelistic ministry. What further work remained to be done in order to turn to the best account the powerful impulse that had been given, was more of a pastoral than of a missionary kind, and that work he felt was abundantly safe in the hands of Mr. Milne, Mr. Gray, and the other brethren with whom it had been his privilege and delight to labour throughout the whole course of those eventful days. The sacred spring-tide, however, flowed on with unabated force to the last, and he closes, immediately before leaving Perth, the first year of his ministry as a preacher of the gospel, and the twenty-fifth year of his earthly life, in a sort of solemn "triumph in Christ," who still continued in so remarkable a manner to make manifest through him the savour of his saving knowledge and grace.

"*March 28th*, 1840.—When during this day I tried to be grateful to the Lord for all the marvellous work that I have seen during the year that was closing, I felt my soul almost overwhelmed, and could only think with joy on the subject, when I remembered that I had an eternity to spend in praising and blessing God. Praise to the Lamb! infinite, eternal praise; mercy sovereign, infinite, unchangeable, everlasting! The Father electing, the Son redeeming, the Spirit renewing.

"'To Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
The God whom I adore,
Be glory, as it was, and is,
And shall be evermore!'

"*Wednesday, April 1st*, 1840.—This day begins my 26th year. I would act for the Lord Jesus henceforth as if I had hitherto done absolutely nothing in his service. May he enable me. I spent the morning alone and in fasting. The Lord, I trust, was near, though I cannot say that I spent the season in a manner befitting such an occasion. Indeed, I can hardly dare to think of God's dealings with me. They overwhelm my soul with astonishment. I wait for *eternity* to study and admire and extol them."

Such were those remarkable days at Perth during the spring of 1840, as their history is traced in the simple and solemn words of the chief actor himself. It may be desirable, however, for a moment to look at those scenes as seen by another eye; and this we are enabled to do through the following interesting recollections kindly furnished to me by one who herself "owed much in after-life" to the sacred impressions received at that memorable time. Of the after and permanent results of the work then done we shall afterwards have occasion to speak; what we have now to quote refers rather to the immediate aspect of the movement while still in progress, as it presented itself to one who lived through it and deeply shared its spirit:—

"It was in a hotel in Rome that we first read, in the columns of *Galignani's Messenger*, the name of William Burns. The article was a bitter and sneering caricature. Returning to Scotland a few weeks later, without having had any opportunity of being in church in the interval, and with the bewitching mummeries of the Roman Church, as they surrounded the person of Gregory XVI., in vivid recollection, we were taken to an inquirers' meeting conducted by Mr. Burns in Perth; and the thirty years which have since sped away, instead of effacing, have only deepened the impression of the scene we then witnessed. William Burns was speaking from Revelation xix. of the doom of Antichrist, and the hallelujah which shall rise from the redeemed when the smoke of her torment shall ascend in their sight. He was warning the unsaved that over their destruction also the same assenting 'Amen, hallelujah,' must yet arise, if they persisted in rejecting Jesus. He was inviting poor sinners to come to Calvary's fountain and wash and be clean. He was warning such as imagined they had washed and were living unholily, thus: 'You are saying, 'If I sin it will easily be washed out again.' Or, if not *saying* it with the lip, you are acting it out fearfully in the life. Ah! the soul that has washed its filthy garments in the stream of Calvary is careful how the remedy is used. Many believers have so much allowed the stains of conformity to the world to disfigure the white robe, that instead of representing the work of God within, they are scarcely to be distinguished from the servants of the devil.' He was setting before believers the coming joys of the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and said, 'This blessedness is not so far off as the world seems to think; the meanest saint can tell that it has already set in with a sweetness unspeakable. Ushered into the breast of many by billows of affliction and temptation, beating wildly on the soul with their tempestuous swell, yet are the beginnings so glorious and so blessed, that they are an earnest of a springing up of a life eternal in the heavens. On the joys which shall crown our union with Emmanuel no destroyer shall lay the withering blight of his death-cold hand; no ruthless separation shall snatch our happiness from us, or us from our happiness. After washing for a few days more in the free fountain here—after a few days more weeping on account of sin and sorrow—you shall awake suddenly in the city of our God, to walk with Emmanuel for ever in the courts above. The company, small here, will be innumerable yonder. Ten thousand times ten thousand are their voices, and ten thousand times ten thousand are the harps they tune; but it is as the sounding of *one* voice. Hallelujah! 'tis the key note of an eternal song. Only *one* name rests upon their lips; it is Emmanuel. They know but *one* song, the song of the redeemed. It is sometimes difficult to say here '*all* his judgments are righteous,' for they are often heavy and severe. When you join that company, your narrow and short-sighted views will be gone. If I were ever to see the smoke of your torment ascending before the throne, I would have to say Amen; hallelujah! and if you, standing on high, were to see the smoke of my torment ascending, you too would cry Amen; hallelujah! . . . An hour has nearly elapsed since we began to speak with you; it is just taking wing; a few seconds and it will have fled to bear its tale to the judgment-seat. Shall it announce the submission of a sinner, the return of a prodigal, the adoption of a son into the family above?' The deepest solemnity pervaded the assembly, as the simple searching truth was calmly presented. Individuals were conversed with in St. Leonard's Church for an hour or two afterwards; and many a burden was there laid upon 'the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.' These inquiry-meetings were held three times a week, and in the evening the church was open for the crowds that thronged it from town and country. An hour before the time of service every seat was filled. The multitude generally remained in silence, and many heads were bowed in prayer. The stairs leading to the pulpit were also filled, and it was with difficulty the preacher could be conducted thither. The Rev. John Milne, the recently settled pastor of the congregation, usually shared the pulpit with the speaker. We recall especially one evening when a chair was handed up for James Hamilton, then of Abernyte, to sit at their side. It seems now as if one chariot had sufficed to carry home the three, 'William Burns, John Milne, and James Hamilton.' That night was one of power. 'Tough bows require sharp pruning,' said the preacher, when some one would have tried to blunt the knife, by advising him to the use of more measured and tempered language. 'A sleeping minister and a sleeping congregation, what will they do in the day of judgment?' He was privileged to break this sleep—in congregations, in kirk-sessions, and in manses. The first part of his discourse always embodied a mass of telling doctrine, holding up the divine law right in face of the sinner's conscience. The appeals in the latter part were irresistibly winning, brimming over with the freely offered love of Jesus. The Spirit was glorified. He arrested many before the preacher had time to enter his subject; in some cases the arrow sped from the first psalm that was given out, and many were awakened during the opening prayer. It is not easy to describe his prayers. Adoration of Jehovah's uncreated glory, as it falls on the darkness and corruption of man's heart, and reveals the abyss of a yawning hell, filled the first part. He brought himself and the saved part of his audience down into the sides of the pit whence they were hewn, in a way that made the greatest outcast in the church feel that he or she was sympathized with and carried abreast; and then his soul would as it were be seen to pass anew through the cleansing flood, up into the very presence-chamber of the King of kings, and there looked up into the Father's face with unutterable love. His theology was unbiased, and swung like a pendulum across the truth of God, avoiding all limited, classified, partial, and one-sided expressions of it. His training of young converts was thus invaluable to them. 'No cross, no crown,' was the term of enlistment. 'Suffering is the law of the kingdom.' 'The greater your sacrifices for Christ, the more of his joy will fill your heart.' 'Forsake the glass, the dance, and the song, if you would drink of the rivers of his pleasures, if you would leap for joy on the shores of Emmanuel's land, if you would take up the unending hallelujah.'

"He warned the young that if they would live near the Lord, they must be content to be singular even among believers, and to travel sometimes almost alone. 'I am often reminded of this,' he said, 'when setting out by the early stage-coach. The morning is sharp, companions few, and from the top of the coach you see whole streets shuttered in as in the night. But just here and there, one, earlier up than others, has begun her morning work, with no one apparently to notice or thank her. She will find out the good of it before nightfall. So with you. Forget the crowd, walk with God alone.'

"It was a high standard he himself set before them. 'The longing of my heart would be to go once all round the world before I die, and preach one gospel invitation in the ear of every creature.' He had a tender regard for those who were kept long in darkness; saying, that those to whom the Lord had revealed much of their own sin and misery in the place of dragons, were often led into high places in the school of Christ.

"All the roads from the town were nightly trod by groups of country hearers. Some were returning home to sing for the first time the new song. Others with heavy pace carried an arrow rankling in the heart. Others bore the good news of companions in town turning to God, the public-house signs taken down, the police comparatively idle, and families and workshops sharing the wide-spread blessing."

In the words, in fine, of Mr. Milne, used a year and a half afterwards, on a retrospect of these remarkable scenes: "God's people quickened; backsliders restored; the doubting and uncertain brought to decision and assurance; hidden ones who for years had walked solitary brought to light, and united to a family of brothers and sisters; a large number of the worldly, thoughtless, ignorant, self-righteous turned to the Lord; a peculiar people growing up, who are separate from the world, know and love one another; watch over, exhort, and aid one another, and seem to grow in humility and zeal;"[1] such is the summary history of the work done and the fruits of blessing gathered in at Perth during this signal "time of power."

After a few more days spent in fulfilling some country engagements, he started for Aberdeen on the 7th, amid a crowd of loving friends who had assembled to bid him farewell; but rejoicing still more to see, as he passed through Bridgend, "that William G——'s sign as a spirit-seller was taken down!"

CHAPTER VII.

1840.

LABOURS AT ABERDEEN.

The details which have been given in the three last chapters from Mr. Burns' own journals, of the nature of his labours, and the scenes amongst which he mingled, at Kilsyth, Dundee, and Perth, will render it unnecessary to give such extended extracts with reference to his evangelistic work at Aberdeen. The spirit in which he laboured, and the results which followed, were here in all essential respects identical with what we have just described elsewhere, and might be said to be simply the continuation of what was there begun. The same unresting activity, intense earnestness, and vivid realization of the unseen world on the part of the preacher—the same mighty and gradually swelling tide of interest, inquiry, irrepressible emotion, on the part of the throngs that waited on his ministry and hung upon his lips—were here as there the salient features of a movement which was the subject of solemn joy to one part of the community, and of wonder, consternation, scorn, or anxious misgiving to the other. Sermons to densely crowded audiences in three several churches on each Lord's-day; prayer-meetings in the morning and afternoon, and a public address in the evening of each week-day, with generally an additional hour of counsel, instruction, and prayer, for those whose intense anxiety still detained them after the long service was over, with words by the wayside and conferences with inquirers and young disciples at all other available hours, constituted the daily history of his work, so far as it can be written by man, for weeks together. An occasional sermon, too, in the open air—in Castle Street, or at the foot of the Barrack Hill—startled and scandalized a Christian community, which has since seen the same self-denying service done, with no other feeling than that of admiration, by so many others. Even his brethren in the ministry, who in all other respects approved and furthered his work, with one single exception deprecated a course which all the existing conventions condemned, but which, by its remarkable results, in sounding the depths of a class of society which no other agency had reached, more than justified itself:—

---

[1] Evidence supplied to the Synod of Merse and Teviotdale, in answer to queries proposed by them, October 25, 1841. See *Life of Rev. John Milne*, p. 55.

"In the evening," says he, "I (April 26) preached in Castle Street to an immense audience, chiefly men, on the willingness of Jesus to save the chief of sinners, from the 'thief on the cross.' I felt more of the divine presence than on any former occasion in Aberdeen, and laboured to pull sinners out of the fire. The impression was very deep; many weeping, some screaming, and one or two quite overpowered. At eight o'clock we adjourned to the North Church, where Mr. Wilson from Belfast was preaching, and when he had concluded we remained with a crowded audience for another hour in exhortation, prayer, and praise. After this we dismissed the people; but a great many were so deeply moved that we could not get away, and accordingly I returned with Mr. Murray, who addressed along with me about four hundred, from the precentor's desk. After prayer and singing, we dismissed about ten o'clock. Getting with difficulty out of the crowd, I went down to Albion Street, and addressed in a school-room about seventy of the poorest and vilest of the people in that degraded district. They were very solemn and interested to all appearance. We separated about eleven. Though this was a day of uncommon toil, yet, praise to the Lord! I was not worn out, but felt strong as ever on my way home. . . . I may here record that none of the ministers were in favour of the street-preaching but Mr. Parker. He and his session all went to Castle Street; though I felt that I did not need human countenance, having so clear a conviction of the duty, and being so conscious of the divine support in this effort to advance the glory of Jesus."

Other tokens besides the immediate sense of the "divine support," and the access opened to him to "the poorest and vilest of the people," soon appeared to confirm his conviction that he was in this matter in the right line of action. "When walking on the links," says he in his journal of next day, "in the afternoon I met some poor lads, with whom I prayed among the sand-banks. They were very serious for the time, and one of them said he had been in Albion Street school the night before. He said that many were praying for the first time, and he among the rest, after I went away." We are not surprised, accordingly, to find him soon again on the same battle-ground, renewing the charge from the same point at which he had already effected so wide a breach.

The scruples of his brethren, too, soon gave way, as they witnessed and gladly hailed the good results of the bolder course from which at first they had shrunk:—

"*Tuesday, April 28th.*—In the evening I preached to an *immense* audience at the foot of the Barrack Hill, including multitudes of the worst people in the town. I was hoarse, and the situation was very unfavourable, owing to its vicinity to the public road; yet with all these disadvantages the audience were most fixed and solemn in their attention, and I was encouraged to intimate a similar meeting in the same vicinity for Thursday night, though I had previously proposed to leave Aberdeen on the afternoon of that day. This afternoon I had also at half-past five a meeting in the barracks with about thirty of the soldiers. They seemed much impressed, and some of them shed tears when I came away. . . .

"*Thursday, April 30th.*—I was again at the barracks in the afternoon; appearances just such as on the former day. I preached thereafter at the foot of the Barrack Hill to an immense audience. I had been thinking on the subject of conversion, but I was led in the time of the opening prayer to think of Matthew xi. 28, and I preached on it with perhaps more of the divine assistance than I had done at any time before. Towards the end especially, many were screaming and in tears. . . . I felt as if I could pull men out of the fire; indeed, I never had more of this feeling than this evening, and on Sabbath evening in Castle Street. In order to escape the crowd I slipped into the barracks, and after walking up and down in concealment a little, I went up to some of the men and spoke to them of Jesus and salvation. I got a good many of them to come and have a last prayer-meeting before our parting, which we had accordingly. When going up to the room I met dear J. C.[1] standing with streaming eyes alone. He had run up Union Street, thinking to overtake me, but not seeing me, and being obliged to be in by nine o'clock, he returned disconsolate, thinking that he might never see me again, the regiment being to leave Aberdeen for

---

[1] An interesting convert mentioned in the journal before several times.

Paisley on Tuesday first. Our meeting was sweet indeed, and our parting affecting, but full of the hope of meeting in the presence of the Lamb. Glory to his matchless name!"

Of the after-history of individual souls amongst those neglected multitudes in Albion Street and Barrack Hill, to whom the gates of the eternal kingdom were thus opened for once at least, so widely, but few and broken fragments can be gathered from the records of earth. The names of some of them occur in connection with the labours of a committee of inquiry soon after appointed by the presbytery of the bounds, and the cases of others are doubtless well known to individual ministers of the city, under whose ministry the seeds of life then sown were cherished and ripened to holy fruitfulness. With his friends amongst the soldiers, however, he was destined to meet again in other and deeply interesting circumstances, when, five years afterwards, they rallied round him, and acted as his gallant body-guard amid the rude assaults of the ruffianly mob at Montreal.

Throughout these manifold and arduous labours Mr. Burns had enjoyed, as ever afterwards in Aberdeen, the valuable countenance and co-operation of several of the ministers of the city, and particularly of Dr. Murray of the North Parish, Mr. Parker of Bonaccord Church, and Mr. Mitchell of Holborn, in one or other of whose churches most of his meetings both on Sabbaths and on week-days were held. The two former have since died—leaving behind them the rich savour of a revered and blessed memory. Mr. Parker was a man of deep, thoughtful, and even severe piety, with peculiarly profound and solemn views of the holy law and sovereign grace of God—who had been recently translated to his present charge from a chapel in Dundee, where he had laboured for several years with remarkable acceptance and success. Dr. Murray was a ripe scholar, a sound divine, a brave and godly man, and, especially during his earlier ministry in

Trinity Chapel, a stirring and successful preacher. He lived to a good old age, and passed away amid the universal respect of a community that had for long years honoured him as one of its most worthy and true-hearted citizens. Both loved and befriended the young evangelist with that peculiar and beautiful affection which one sometimes sees in those of more advanced years towards the young.

On Tuesday, May 1, he left Aberdeen for a season, in order to fulfil some other pressing engagements—thus briefly summing up the result of his labours there during the past month:—

> "I am now come to the end of my sojourn in Aberdeen, and must notice a few general features in what met my eye and ear. We had meetings every morning to the end, in Bonaccord Church, which were very sweet and solemn, and increased in size towards the end. I also continued to meet almost every afternoon, from one to three, with anxious inquirers. Many that came to these meetings, as well as many that called at the house, seemed in a most promising state, and altogether, upon a review of all I saw of this kind in Aberdeen, there seemed to be very hopeful symptoms of an extensive awakening. And now, Lord Jesus, grant me and all thy people there, the Holy Ghost as a Spirit of praise for all the tokens of thy glorious and gracious presence there; and may those who were impressed by thy power not be left to fall back into their former security beneath the abiding wrath of God, but be brought to wash in thy blood, and put on the glorious wedding-garment of thy righteousness, and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour by a life and conversation becoming the gospel; and to thee be all the glory! Amen."

His retirement from Aberdeen, however, was only temporary. Neither in his own judgment nor in that of the brethren who had laboured with him, had he yet made full proof of his ministry there; and accordingly, after an absence of five months, we find him again in the field, prosecuting with equal devotedness and zeal, and with even still more remarkable results, the work which he had before begun. For two months together, on week-days and Sabbath-days, the attendance at the meetings continued unabated, and the number of inquirers increased. I find on one of the last pages of his Aberdeen diary specific mention of the 200th case of spiritual anxiety with which he had had to deal since the commencement of his visit; and those who sought him out on this errand, and with whom he was able to converse, were of course only a fraction of those who were more or less affected by the general and wide-spread impression. So great at one time was the number of the anxious, that appointments made for their special behoof would be responded to by such crowds, that individual instruction became impossible, and the inquirers' meeting grew into a congregation. Meanwhile the intensity of feeling manifested by those who were the more especial subjects of the movement was often very great, and found vent to itself in the case of those who were of a more impressible nature, and were least habituated to self-control, now in silent weeping, and now in loud sobs and cries. There was undoubtedly at this time a good deal of what is called religious excitement. The solemn impressions of eternal things renewed night after night, in crowded congregations composed in large measure of the same individuals, and under the spell of a voice that seemed as if the very echo of eternity, gradually grew to an intensity which became at last altogether uncontrollable.

It cannot certainly be matter of surprise that such manifestations, occurring in the midst of a great Christian community, should have attracted a large measure of public attention, and should have been thought deserving of serious consideration and inquiry on the part of those intrusted with authority in the church. They were sure to be variously, and by many severely, judged. Not only were those to whom every expression and sign of religious earnestness were but as the raving of fools, sure to turn away from such scenes with contemptuous scorn, but even some, to whom the struggles of the interior life were a great and blessed reality, might question whether a spiritual movement, attended by such a tumult of emotion, were likely to prove in the highest degree solid or lasting. It was not that the spiritual concern of those whose souls were most powerfully stirred by the melting and thrilling words of the preacher was in itself too solemn or too deep. No amount of solicitude in regard to interests so stupendous as the favour and love of God, and the eternal life of the soul in him, could be regarded as either unreasonable or extreme. Of such solicitude, whether called by the name of excitement, or enthusiasm, or the awakening of the spiritual life, well might it be said with President Edwards: "If such things are enthusiasm or the fruits of a distempered brain, let my brain be evermore possessed of that happy distemper! If this be distraction, I pray God that the world of mankind may be seized with this benign, meek, beneficent, beatifical, glorious distraction." But the question still remained, whether a course of such *continuous* and *exhausting* excitement of the feelings were not fitted rather to hinder than to help spiritual inquiry in the highest sense—by preventing quiet thoughtfulness, and possibly issuing in a reaction of deeper carelessness and apathy. Grace, it was urged, while in itself supernatural and divine, yet works ever according to the essential laws of our moral and physical constitution; and whatever in any degree runs counter to those laws must tend in that degree to hinder or to mar that work. Of those laws the healthy equipoise of the different elements of our nature—the reason, the conscience, the feelings—is one of the most fundamental, and therefore any undue or exclusive predominance of one of these to the suppression or abeyance of the others must tell with more or less of injurious influence upon all. It was alleged too that the excitement then prevalent was in many cases an excitement of fear rather than of love or moral feeling, and for that reason also the more liable to prove evanescent, or to issue in morbid and unsatisfactory results. It was not enough to say in answer to these considerations that the work was, as most Christian men fully believed, in its essential nature and substance a work of the Spirit of God; for a divine work was all the more sure to be more or less marred by the erring touch of man; and that work, it was maintained, would have been helped, not hindered, and the spiritual birth or holy progress of souls furthered, had the public meetings and protracted and exciting services been fewer, and the hours of still and meditative retirement more.

There was some truth, doubtless, in these considerations; but probably not so much as those who urged them were disposed to think. It was not enough considered that such a season of general awakening to the sight and sense of eternal things was in its nature exceptional and temporary, and that the intense excitement with which it was at first attended was sure, in the course of nature, soon to die down into a more quiet and tranquil condition of things. Whatever effects of a permanent kind might result from the earthquake shock, in startling souls from the sleep of death, its immediate tremor and concussion would soon pass away. Neither in the public mind generally, nor in the history of individual souls, would the tumult of emotion last long enough to produce, at least to the full extent, that revulsion or paralyzing exhaustion of feeling that was apprehended. Many of those who were most deeply moved by the prevailing influence very soon passed the crisis of their anxiety, and through that sore agony and travail of soul entered into a state of calm peace and rest in God, which was the very opposite of all tumultuous excitement. The same power that was mighty to wound was mighty also to heal, so that "the bones which" that divine unseen hand "had broken" were speedily made to "rejoice." There was the gentle and reviving south wind, as well as the biting north—the time of the singing of birds, as well as the winter and the rain. Thus those whose desires after God, the living God, were deep and real, did not long fail of the object of their quest, and with it of that holy calm which can alone effectually still the tumults of the heart; while in the case of those whose natural sensibilities alone were stirred, there was enough in the cares of the world and the pressing exigencies of daily life soon to blunt the edge of excited feeling, and preclude the danger of a too intense or long-continued anxiety. Those, in short, who had then been roused to momentary seriousness, would either inevitably soon sink into slumber again, or have their eyes opened to the sight of Him, the beholding of whom alone can permanently keep the soul awake, and in whom there is not only life everlasting but peace unspeakable.

It should be remembered also that those to whose benefit Mr. Burns' labours were at this time for the most part directed, belonged to that class whom it is most difficult to arouse to any thought or care about eternal things at all, and who when they *are* so roused, are then only led to think when they have been first made to feel. Those rude and untaught hearts in Albion Street and Barrack Hill, or amidst the crowds of factory workers, who were brought to weep and wail aloud at the thought of God and eternity, might never get beyond those mere sobs and tears—might catch only a momentary glimpse of a higher world, and then pass again into darkness; and yet surely the very state of mind which made them capable of such tears had already raised them far above their former state of stolid indifference and moral debasement, and brought them at least several steps nearer the kingdom of God than they were before. There are those—let us never forget it—whose deeper nature must be reached, primarily and chiefly, not through the head, but through the heart.

It was a time doubtless of high, but, in the main, of sacred and salutary excitement. Occasionally, no doubt, the tide of feeling was too unrestrained—more continuous and less subjected to regulative control, than with a view to solid and enduring results would have been desirable. There was not indeed too much feeling; but there was perhaps too little thought—not too much of the whirlwind and of the fire, but possibly too little of the still small voice. Without any less of the religion of the heart, there might have been more of the religion of the informed judgment, the educated conscience, and of the disciplined will. It is hard in any case, and under any ministry, fully to reconcile and combine what may be called the stimulative and the educative functions of the gospel message—to give full scope at once to the powers that stir and to the principles that should guide and control the spiritual nature. I do not say—least of all would the subject of this memoir have said—that in the present instance this reconciliation was perfectly attained. In the great lack, too, of wise guides of souls, and in the comparative inexperience in such work even of those who were most fitted for it, it is not wonderful if a spiritual movement, at once so extensive and profound, should have got occasionally somewhat beyond control; and if some portion of its good results should thus have been lost or have passed away into impure and morbid forms. Even a Divine work in human hands partakes ever and necessarily more or less of the imperfection and the error of that which is human. In the main, however, and with every reasonable allowance for such imperfection and error, we believe this remarkable movement to have been a real and most blessed work of the Spirit of God—a true awakening, through his heavenly breath, of the spiritual nature, and quickening of the springs of highest life in multitudes of human souls. If it was an enthusiasm, it was an enthusiasm of faith, of love, and of holy endeavour and aspiration.

Still, let it be admitted that the dangers apprehended from excessive and too continuous excitement, if often exaggerated, are nevertheless real, and that so far as they can be avoided, they are, in the interest of the work itself, and for the honour of Him whose work it is, to be sedulously and anxiously guarded against. "There being a great many errors and sinful irregularities," to use again the words of Edwards, "mixed with this work of God, arising from our weakness, darkness, and corruption, does not indeed hinder it from being very glorious. Our follies and sins in some respects manifest the glory of it. The glory of divine power and grace is set off with the greater lustre by what appears at the same time of the weakness of an earthen vessel. It is God's pleasure to manifest the weakness and unworthiness of the subject at the same time that he displays the excellency of his power and the riches of his grace. And I doubt not but some of these things which make some of us here on earth to be out of humour, and to look on this work with a sour countenance, heighten the songs of the angels when they praise God and the Lamb for what they see of the glory of God's all-sufficiency, and the efficacy of Christ's redemption. And how unreasonable is it that we should be backward to acknowledge the glory of what God has done, because the devil, and we in hearkening to him, have done a great deal of mischief." Still none the less error is error, and sin is sin, and both are to be with the utmost watchfulness and care guarded against, so that the work which we recognize as divine may not only be, but be seen to be, "honourable and glorious," and that no needless stumbling-block may be thrown in the way of any true though feeble seeker after God.

Whether, then, and to what extent, any such incidental evils had appeared in the present case, was a most fair and important subject of inquiry; and a committee was accordingly appointed for that purpose by the presbytery of Aberdeen, moved thereto chiefly by some very unfair and one-sided accounts of some of the meetings which had appeared in one of the public prints. The result was eminently satisfactory. The proceedings were conducted on the whole—as Mr. Burns himself most cordially admitted—with candour and fairness, and in such a manner as fully to elicit the essential elements of the truth. To the convener of the committee in particular, the Rev. Wm. Pirie,[1] he felt himself under deep obligation for the kindness and courtesy with which he conducted his own examination, when called personally to appear as a witness.

The committee of presbytery very properly extended their inquiries beyond the sphere of their own immediate jurisdiction, to some of the other scenes of Mr. Burns' labours, where a religious movement essentially similar to that at Aberdeen had taken place, and where from the lapse of time its real nature and tendency could be the better tested. The result was a remarkable concurrence of weighty and impressive testimony alike to the depth and extent of the influence at work, and of the holy and enduring fruit in the hearts and lives of multitudes of its subjects; and the presbytery accordingly agreed to the following resolution, as embodying their mature and final judgment, after a full consideration of the whole facts and bearings of the case:—

---

[1] Now Rev. Dr. Pirie, Professor of Divinity in the University of Aberdeen.

"The Presbytery, having taken into their solemn consideration the evidence on revivals of religion received by their Committee on that subject, resolved,

"1. That a revival of religion, consisting in the general quickening of believers, and the conversion of multitudes of unbelievers, by the Holy Spirit, cannot but be an object of most earnest desire to every follower of the Lord; that the genuineness of such a revival is chiefly to be tested by the nature and permanence of the effects by which it is followed; that it can only be expected to flow from the use of the appointed means, accompanied with the abundant outpouring of the Spirit of God; that it should be made a subject of fervent and persevering prayer; and that, when such a revival takes place, it should not be dreaded or spoken of with levity, but should be carefully and seriously marked, and acknowledged with devout thanksgiving.

"2. That the evidence, derived from answers to certain queries sent by the Committee to ministers and others in different parts of the country, amply bears out the fact that an extensive and delightful work of revival has commenced, and is in hopeful progress in various districts of Scotland—the origin of which, instrumentally, is to be traced to a more widely diffused spirit of prayer on the part of ministers and people, and to the simple, earnest, and affectionate preaching of the gospel of the grace of God; that this work in the districts referred to, many of which are locally far distant from others, has been attended with few of those evils which have generally more or less characterized seasons of great religious excitement; and that, on the whole, an amount of good has been accomplished which loudly calls for gratitude and praise to Him 'who turneth the hearts of men as the rivers of water.'

"3. That in the case of Aberdeen, to which the evidence more especially refers, it clearly appears, so far as the test of time can be applied to the subject, that a very considerable number of persons, chiefly in early life, have been strongly, and it is hoped savingly, impressed with the importance of eternal things, and are in the course of further instruction; that many of all ages have been awakened to a more serious concern about Christ and salvation than they formerly felt, and have been quickened to activity in well-doing; and that the labours of Mr. W. C. Burns, preacher of the gospel, are peculiarly discernible in connection with these results. At the same time, the Presbytery cannot but regret that such an exclusive reference should have been made to two particular meetings at which Mr. Burns presided, where the services were protracted to a late hour, and where much outward excitement prevailed—circumstances obviously liable to much inconvenience as well as misconception—while it appears from the evidence that many other meetings were held for religious instruction, through the same instrumentality, which could be liable to no such misconception, and where much good was wrought. And, upon the whole, the Presbytery are convinced that, if it had entered more into the nature of the inquiry to ascertain simply the extent of the awakening that has been effected in this city and neighbourhood, the evidence of a favourable kind would have been such as to lead to increased thanksgiving.

"4. That the Presbytery having considered the whole evidence that has been laid before them on this unspeakably important subject, feel themselves called upon to recommend to all ministers, preachers, and elders within their bounds, in their respective spheres, to labour more and more diligently and prayerfully, in the use of all scriptural means, to promote the cause of vital religion, which needs so much to be revived among us; and they would also exhort and entreat all the private members of the Church to study to grow in grace, to abound in all the fruits of righteousness, and to plead more earnestly with the great Head of the Church that he would pour out of his Spirit more plentifully upon us, and bless his appointed ordinances, that the wilderness may become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest."

Before the commencement of the investigation, Mr. Burns had already closed his labours at Aberdeen, having been called to take the temporary charge of a new church at Dundee. He left for that town on the 5th of December, at early dawn; but not too early to find awaiting him at the place of departure a number of those who had learned to look to him "even as an angel of God," and who parted from him with many tears:—

"*Saturday, December 5th.*—Though I was very late up last night (this morning), and had but a short time for sleep, I awoke of my own accord at the proper time quite refreshed, and set out at twenty minutes to seven with the Dundee mail. A number of my young friends had found out the time of my departure, and stood by on the pavement in tears. The mockery of many around made our tongues silent: we looked at each other, with Jesus in our hearts' eye I hope, and wept."

CHAPTER VIII.

1840.

WORK AMONG THE MOUNTAINS.

"I shall never forget," says one to whom Mr. Burns "was more than any other man," "the first time I saw him. It was at Lawers, on Sabbath the 16th of August, 1840. The whole country was ringing with the wonderful movement in Kilsyth, Perth, and Dundee, with which his name was associated. It was rumoured too that a short time before a person had died in connection with one of his services. A great multitude assembled, not only with the ordinary feelings of curiosity, but with feelings of wonder and solemnity deepening almost into fear. I can remember the misty day, and the eager crowds that flocked from all directions across hill and lake. The service was of course in the open air, and when the preacher appeared many actually felt as if it were an angel of God. There was an indescribable awe over the assembly. Mr. Burns' look, voice, tone; the opening psalm, the comment, the prayer, the chapter, the text (it was the parable of the Great Supper in Luke xiv.), the lines of thought, even the minutest; the preacher's incandescent earnestness; the stifled sobs of the hearers on this side, the faces lit up with joy on that; the death-like silence of the crowd, as they reluctantly dispersed in the gold-red evening —the whole scene is ineffaceably daguerreotyped on my memory. It was the birthplace of many for eternity. Last year (1868), when a deputation from the General Assembly visited the presbytery of Breadalbane, in connection with the state of religion, a venerable minister stated that such of the subjects of that gracious work as still survive adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour in all things. Most of the congregations in the district received the divine shower."[1]

Mr. Burns' labours in Breadalbane, or the romantic district that lies along the margin of Loch Tay, took place between the periods of his first and of his second visit to Aberdeen described in the last chapter, and constituted altogether one of the most interesting and characteristic parts of his whole evangelistic course. Here he was peculiarly at home. The solemn forms of the everlasting hills and the great shadow of the supernatural which they seemed to cast even over the spirit of the people were congenial to him. The Sabbath stillness too, and the fresh and healthful upland air, contributed to restore tone and vigour to a frame on which the fevered atmosphere of city life and city work had begun sensibly to tell. Never probably at any period of his life was he more happy in the best sense than during this interval of quiet thoughtfulness and restful labour—kneeling in lonely prayer in some forest thicket by the river or mountain side, or standing up before those arrested crowds that hung upon his words, silent and solemn as the mountains around.

---

[1] *The Shepherd of Israel: or Illustrations of the Inner Life.* By the Rev. Duncan Macgregor, M.A., Minister of St. Peter's, Dundee. Pp. 236–7.

Never, probably, were the sacred impressions produced by his preaching more deep and spiritual than here, or the tendency to an unhealthy and nervous excitement less. The following graphic words from the writer already quoted were true of him at all times, but at this time emphatically so: "Like the Baptist he came preaching repentance, and with terrible earnestness warned the thousands that flocked to hear him to flee from the coming wrath. Like the Baptist, too, he was independent of home ties—lived, as it were, in the wilderness, 'making himself grandly solitary for the work of Christ!' His very eyes left their light with you after he had gone. . . . And yet there was an Isaiah-like grandeur about his expositions of the gospel. When his lips were touched with the live coal, it was indeed a feast of fat things to hear him. And even when he was straitened, which he often was, owing to the incessant demands upon him, there was always something precious which stuck fast in the memory."

To this interesting period of Mr. B.'s labours we propose to devote the present chapter; but it will be proper before entering on it, to glance briefly at the course of his movements during the three preceding months.

For some weeks after he left Aberdeen, those seasons of "straitening," of which Mr. Macgregor speaks, had been more than usually frequent and painful to him. The reaction of feeling and the physical exhaustion naturally succeeding a time of high excitement, produced a languor alike of mind and body, which even his vigilant self-jealousy could not avoid attributing, in part at least, to other than spiritual causes. Thus at Dundee, May 3d, at the close of a Sabbath's services, he writes, "I was tired and had not much of the Lord's comfortable presence in my work, feeling that I needed rest for the body and a season of solemn retirement to meet with the Lord in personal communion." And again at Stirling, May 6th, "I did not come here with an expectation of doing much, on two grounds: 1st, That my bodily strength was much reduced; and 2d, my mind needed recreation to restore its elasticity and power." Yet even then, sometimes the bow drawn at a venture, albeit by an enfeebled hand, would send an arrow of divine conviction home to some favoured heart:—"I was going out," says he, May 13th, "on Monday night among the people, and dropping words here and there, I somehow looked up the stair when the people were coming down, and the eye fixing on a young man, I pointed to him and said aloud, 'Will *you* come to Christ?' On Tuesday this young man came to me in great distress, and told me that he was a smith belonging to Scone, who was living there when I was in Perth, and often attended our meetings. He said he often wanted to be awakened, and wondered how he was so little moved, when so many around him were. He remained in his undecided state until these words were so remarkably directed to him. They went like a knife to his heart, and seemed to bring him to the foot of the cross!"—He struggled on in the endeavour to fulfil engagements already made, till a decided attack of illness compelled him to pause and "rest a while" under the hospitable roof of Collessie manse, where his kind friends Mr.[1] and Mrs. M'Farlane welcomed and nursed him with an affectionate tenderness, which he never afterwards forgot. In a week or two, however, he was at his work again, preaching to large and deeply moved audiences in various places in Fifeshire, and meeting with unexpected encouragement and support even from some of those ministers who would have been thought least likely to favour his line of things. Dr. Barclay of Kettle, the oldest minister of the Church of Scotland, then in his ninety-first year, who had been always ranked amongst the Moderate party, shook him warmly by the hand as he came down from the pulpit, saying, "I thank you most heartily," and urged him to return. Dr. Ferrie of Kilconquhar,[1] reputed of similar views, made him free alike of his house and of his church, entered with the deepest interest into all the solemn scenes which attended his preaching, and told him that "while he was with him he was to act exactly as if he were the minister of the parish." In the neighbouring parish of Anstruther, then under the pastoral charge of Dr. Ferrie's son, he had a like freedom of action, and a like open and effectual door of access to the consciences and hearts of the people, all the ministers of the place cordially uniting their congregations to form one deeply solemnized audience, in the midst of which "some of the most hardened sinners of the town were seen turning pale as death and shedding tears" under the preacher's appeals. Here he was in the midst of interesting scenes and reminiscences. "Mr. Ferrie's manse," he writes, "is the same that the celebrated James Melville, minister of East Anstruther after the Reformation, lived in, and I spent most of my time on Saturday as also on Sabbath in his study, a little room over the stair which juts out from the house on the outside. It is called 'The Watch Tower,' and is well suited to the name, as it has three small windows looking east, west, and south, from which one can see almost all the town and the whole frith." And again, two days afterwards, July 1st, "I spent the day chiefly alone, seeking personal holiness, the fundamental requisite in order to a successful ministry. I was in Burleigh Castle for an hour on the first floor, which is arched and entire, having climbed up by a broken part of the wall. Before me I had to the right Queen Mary's Island in Lochleven, and to the left the Lomonds, where the Covenanters hid themselves from their persecutors, and I stood amid the ruins of the castle of one of their leaders. The scene was solemn and affecting, and I trust the everlasting Emmanuel was with me. O that I had a martyr's heart, if not a martyr's death and a martyr's crown!"

---

[1] Now Dr. M'Farlane, of the Free Church, Dalkeith.

---

[1] Also Professor of Civil History in the University of St. Andrews.

After rapid visits to Strathmiglo, Milnathort, Cleish, Kinross, and Dunfermline, he now proceeded westward by Stirling, Gargunnock, and Kippen, to Kilsyth, and thence, after nearly a month of quiet pastoral work, which was to him almost like repose, northward to those scenes amongst the "Sabbath hills," where we have now to trace his footsteps. He had left Kilsyth on the 12th August, and after spending two days of incessant labour in Glasgow, proceeded northward *viâ* Lochlomond and Glen Falloch to Lawers, where he commenced his labours on Sabbath the 16th, the day referred to by Mr. Macgregor, and thence advanced gradually eastward to Fortingall, Aberfeldy, Logierait, Moulin, Tenandry, Kirkmichael, as God in his providence opened the way, welcomed everywhere by a solemnly expectant and willing people. Our space will only admit of a very few characteristic extracts from a journal which we would gladly give entire:—

"*Inverarnan, Friday, August 14th.*—I travelled to Inverarnan, at the head of Lochlomond, where I slept. Nothing particular occurred by the way, except that I spoke to one or two of my fellow-travellers, wandering in quest of pleasure, and was generally in such a dead frame of soul that I had to remain below, and could not dare to open my mouth in the Lord's name. At Inverarnan I spent much of the afternoon in wandering about and admiring the grandeur of the Lord's works in this mouth of the Highlands of Perthshire. I noticed two things among the people as affording an index to the nature of the privileges they had enjoyed. Some seemed to have full knowledge of a kind that is only to be got by hearing the most spiritual and systematic of our Scottish preachers, and one woman I met on the road who seemed to me a perfect specimen of a groaning hypocrite (perhaps I am doing her injustice, the

Lord pardon me if I am); as soon as I began to speak to her, she wrung her hands and twisted her features as if trying to manufacture the symptoms of repentance, &c. This agreed well with what I know had been the Lord's dealings with this part of the country. They have had under some ministers the *very best preaching*, and some of the people retain not only the mould of the doctrine taught them, but the recollection of the deep and overpowering emotions which it produced in the hand of the Spirit upon many minds at a former period; particularly about twenty years ago, when Breadalbane, &c., was signally blessed of the Lord, under the preaching of Mr. M'Donald and other godly ministers.—Evening, I had a meeting in the toll-house adjoining the inn, with about twenty persons, chiefly men, who seemed solemnized. The innkeeper was not very anxious for this meeting when I spoke of it to him. He had much scriptural knowledge, and many of his expressions put me in mind of Mr. M'Donald's phraseology, but his attachment to his trade seemed stronger than his theology. His family I was much interested in, and they upon the whole received me well, though I did not spare the publican's trade even when Mrs. M'Callum was present. I this forenoon travelled by the Dunkeld coach from Inverarnan to Lawers, up Glen Falloch, down Glen Dochart, and by Killin along the side of Loch Tay, a splendid route for a great part of the way. I did little on the way but sigh occasionally over the poor people whom we passed, and to wish them an interest in Emmanuel. I also gave away one or two little books to Highland boys in their kilt, who hung upon the coach from time to time. Dear boys, they looked surprised and pleased! At Killin I breakfasted along with two young gentlemen on a fishing excursion, who seemed to eye me suspiciously with my black clothes and white neckcloth, and took care to allow me to begin breakfast before them, I thought, in order that I might not ask a blessing aloud. When leaving them I said, 'I am a fisher too.' They looked grave, and one of them said, 'Oh! a fisher of men, I suppose.' 'Yes,' I said, 'but like other fishers we have often to complain of a bad fishing season.' They smiled, and so we parted. I arrived at Lawers at one P.M., and found Mr. Campbell a truly pious and very kind man. His partner equally so.—Evening, I walked up the hill, and prayed for the outpouring of the Holy Ghost. I had, however, to walk by faith and not by sense.

"*Lawers, Tuesday, August* 18*th.*—We had a prayer-meeting at twelve, when the church was three-fourths filled. Mr. M'Kenzie began, and was followed by Mr. Campbell, both in Gaelic. This occupied nearly two hours, and when I went to the pulpit I found it my duty to dismiss the people without detaining them any longer, offering, however, to converse with any individuals who might desire it. From one hundred and fifty to two hundred waited about the door, and with these I engaged in prayer. During the prayer the Spirit of God was mightily at work among us, so that almost all were deeply moved, and one man cried aloud. Mr. M'Kenzie said that he almost never felt in the same way as at this time. After prayer I addressed the people in a series of miscellaneous remarks tending to bring them immediately to surrender to Jesus. Many I saw in tears, and among these a number of fine stout young Highlanders. We then prayed again, when the impression continued, and concluded by singing Psalm xxxi. 5.

"In the evening I preached at six o'clock to a crowded and most solemn audience from Isaiah xlv. 22, and enjoyed some degree of assistance, I think. We concluded about nine o'clock, but just as the people were going away 'a woman that is a sinner' cried out vehemently, and we had to stay and pray again. Many of the people were in tears, and among these some stout hardy men. Praise to the Lord! It is sweet to see how the people show their kindness when their hearts are opened to Jesus. During these few days there have been four fat lambs sent as presents, some to Mr. Campbell and some to me, with many other articles, such as butter, &c.

"*Breadalbane, Fortingall, Friday, August* 21*st.*— . . . The people were met at the tent, but the wind being high we adjourned to the church. I spoke with assistance at the outset from Psalm lxxii. 16–18, and had considerable enlargement in prayer. The subject was conversion; text, Matthew xviii. 3, and in discoursing upon this I experienced more assistance in attempting to speak home to the very marrow of men's souls than at almost any other time (a few occasions excepted). Two wicked men could not stand it, as we supposed, and retired from their seats. Many others, and among these the stoutest men, were in tears. At the conclusion, when I had pronounced the blessing, I sat down in the pulpit in secret prayer as usual, but to my amazement I heard nobody moving; and waiting a full minute I rose and saw them all standing or sitting, with their eyes in many cases filled with tears, and all fixed on the pulpit. It was indeed a solemn moment, the most solemn Mr. M'Kenzie and Mr. Campbell said they had ever seen. I asked them what they were waiting for, and whether they were waiting for Christ. I prayed again, when there was the utmost solemnity, and then spoke a little from a Psalm which we sung, and then parted at four P.M. The people retired slowly and most of them in tears. We dined at the manse, when all were very serious, and came away immediately in order to hold a meeting in this parish at six o'clock. As we came along the road we overtook some men and women in deep distress, as their tears and sober countenances indicated, and their iron grasp when we shook hands with them. Many also came to their doors and recognized us with evident concern. At six we had a meeting for an hour and half in a house at the east end of this parish, when about a hundred were present. Praise to the Lamb!

"*Breadalbane, Ardeonaig, Sabbath, August* 23*d.*—This morning I crossed the loch at a quarter past eleven, along with hundreds of the people, to preach at the missionary station of Ardeonaig, under the charge of a most primitive Christian minister, Mr. M'Kenzie, a nephew of Lachlan M'Kenzie, late minister of Loch Carron, a very remarkable and eminently honoured minister of Jesus. The tent was placed on the hillside behind the manse, very nearly on the spot where it stood in the days of the former revival under Mr. M'Donald of Urquhart, and the minister who then was placed here, the eminently godly Mr. Findlater, whose memory is sweet in this neighbourhood. There was an immense assembly, collected from a circuit of from twelve to twenty miles, which could not amount to less than 3000. Mr. M'Kenzie began in Gaelic at eleven. I succeeded him in English at one, preaching from

Ezekiel xxxiii. 11. I felt a great uplifting of the heart in pride before God, and though I was enabled so far to get over this as to be able to speak boldly and strongly upon the 'evil ways' of men from which they are called to turn, yet I could make nothing of the display of Jehovah's love which is made in the words, 'As I live, I have no pleasure,' &c.; and though I stopped and prayed with the people for assistance, yet I had to conclude abruptly, having nothing to say but what would profane and degrade in the eyes of the hearers these marvellous words. I came into the house at four o'clock, much cast down on account of the reigning vanity and pride, and self-seeking of my desperately wicked heart, and was driven to my knees, when I found the Lord very gracious, and had a sweet anticipation given me of the Lord's presence in the evening, when we were to meet in the church. Accordingly we met at six o'clock. I did not discourse on any set subject, but was led to speak upon the Psalm which we were to sing (Psalm cii. 11–14), and in this I felt so much enlarged, that both people and preacher were tenderly moved with a view of Emmanuel's love. After we had prayed I made a few additional remarks of a miscellaneous kind, which seemed also to come home to the heart. When we were separating, some individuals began to cry aloud. I tried to quiet them, as I am always afraid that they are in danger of drawing the attention of many who are less affected away from considering the state of their own souls. However, they could not be composed, and when I went up to the gallery, where the most of them were, I found to my joy that they were persons from Fortingall, who had I suppose been impressed on Friday. We took them along with a number of other persons in the same state into the manse, and after prayer sent them away, though not in the best state for going to so great a distance. Praise! I saw a number of men in the church *much* affected, but they did not come so prominently forward, being better able to restrain their feelings. . . .

"*Lawers, Tuesday, August* 25*th*.—We had a meeting here at one o'clock, of thanksgiving to Jehovah for his glorious work in the souls of the people here during the past days. It was conducted chiefly in Gaelic by Mr. Campbell and Mr. M'Kenzie.

I spoke a few words at the end, from Psalm cxlix. 1–4. The people seemed in a very solemn frame. As we came from the ferry-boat, we looked into the old church on the lochside, now used as a barn, and joined in giving the Lord praise for the marvellous displays of his saving grace made in it to many who are now in heaven!—Evening, we had a public meeting at six. The evening was fine, and the audience could not be much under 700, I think. Many had come a distance of 8 miles. I was, as yesterday, brought under a deep sense of my inability to say anything to the Lord's glory previous to our assembling, but I was aided in my extremity in no less a degree. I read Mark ix. 41–50, and preached from Luke xvi. 16. I believe I never spoke more *faithfully* in the pulpit than at this time from these three particulars:—He that *presses* into the kingdom of God—I. Sets his *whole heart* on Christ. II. He gives up all that would prevent his following the Lord fully. III. He fights his way to heaven through the opposition of his enemies. 1. The Devil. 2. The world. 3. The old man, &c. &c. There was very little visible emotion among the people, but the most affecting solemnity and most rivetted attention. It was as if the veil that hides eternity had become transparent, and its momentous realities were seen appearing to the awe-struck eyes of sinners. We parted at a quarter-past nine, after pressing on the people to retire directly home to the throne of grace. I am told to-day (Wednesday) by Mr. Campbell, that for a quarter of a mile from the church every covered retreat was occupied by awakened souls pouring out the heart to God. He seems to think, from all that he saw and has heard to-day, that last night was the most solemn season that we have had at this time. Praise, praise! O *humble me*, good Shepherd, and be thou exalted over all! Amen. . . .

"*Lawers, &c., Saturday, August 29th.*—I left my dear and kind friends at half-past twelve by the coach, after visiting a young man on his sick-bed, a son of the Baptist minister. Many of the people recognized me as we went along. Mrs. M'N—— or Mary M'G——, who was on the road, burst into tears and threw herself down upon the dyke. We had a delightful drive. At Kenmore a gentleman in clerical dress, who had been on the front of the coach, addressed me and said, 'You have very affectionate hearers; I am glad to see it. I am a minister of the Church of England, and have under my care fifteen thousand souls in the heart of London,' &c. Another English gentleman who was standing at the inn said to me, 'That is one of the excellent of the earth, his name is Mr. W——. He was a missionary, but had to come home from bad health, and is now travelling from the same cause.' He had a livery servant with him. He left us at Aberfeldy, and I went down and spoke to him while the horses were changing. He seemed a sweet, humble Christian man. 'Oh!' he said, 'that is a heavenly scene, if we had only a heaven within; at least *I* want that,' &c. We parted with Christian salutations. The Lord's people are indeed *one in him*, though *separated in the world*. . . .

"*Wednesday, September 9th.*—I rode up in the forenoon to B., the property of Mr. S. of S., Perth, where he and his family at present are; with the view of preaching at Tenandry church, near which they are. The scene is the most sublime that I have almost ever seen, including the pass of Killiecrankie, &c. &c.; but I have no time, even had I the power, to describe the grandeur of the Lord's works in nature. I felt the temptation to be unfaithful to the 'rich man' with whom I was called to live, and through this compliance unfaithful also to the poorer classes around. If we are unfaithful to the rich and great all our faithfulness to others must be more or less hypocritical. This I felt, and being made to cry to the Lord for help, I got so completely over it that when preaching in the evening at Tenandry, with the S.'s, Mrs. H. of S., the builder of the church,[1] &c., present, I spoke boldly and openly of many things that the rich alone could understand, and which they would find it hard to bear unless they would unreservedly submit to Christ and his cross. We met at five o'clock; I spoke from Hebrews iv. 7. At first I had assistance enough to expound, but not enough to reach the conscience with keen exhortation and reproof. However, after praying, I got this for a considerable time, and the people were so much affected that all were rivetted in their looks, and some were weeping audibly. The plan followed was this:—I considered the meaning of, 1st. Hearing God's voice. 2d. Hardening the heart. 3d. The arguments against this sin. (*a*) Our losing the promised rest; (*b*) Our having been long called already—'after so long a time;' (*c*) Our being called 'to-day.' After I had prayed I sought to improve these truths by selecting a few passages of God's word, such as 'Ye must be born again,' &c.; 'Come now and let us reason together;' and pressed the people by the arguments of the text to hear and obey these immediately as *the voice of God*. It was this part that seemed to come chiefly *home*. We had an after-meeting with the anxious, who seemed to be numerous.[1] . . .

---

[1] Situated in the birch wood overhanging the pass of Killiecrankie.

"*Logierait, Sabbath, September* 13*th.*—The morning was fine, and an immense congregation assembled at twelve o'clock in the churchyard, with whom I continued uninterruptedly until five P.M., singing, praying, and preaching the word of life. The subject was 2 Corinthians v. 19–vi. 2. The people were very solemnly affected, indeed more visibly so than on any previous Sabbath that I have been in the Highlands; at one time many were crying aloud in agony, and tears were flowing plentifully throughout the audience. One of the addresses that seemed most signally blessed originated in a somewhat remarkable way. As I was about to engage in prayer at the middle of the service, I noticed two young gentlemen looking down upon the audience from a little eminence a few hundred yards distant from us; and feeling a strong desire to say something that might arrest them in their carelessness at so awfully solemn a time, I called on the people of God to join me in praying for them, and spoke so loud that they could easily hear me. When I was doing this a third young man ascended to my view, and joined his companions. The three put me in mind of the three young men who were so remarkably converted at the Kirk of Shotts, when going to

---

[1] "This service," says one who was present, "lasted from five o'clock till nine, beginning early for the convenience of those who had long distances to walk home, and continued late because the hearers hung upon the preacher's words until the sun had set and the full moon had arisen. It was a memorable night in the history of many."—*Notes of Addresses by the Rev. William C. Burns*, edited by M. F. Barbour, page 28, where a sketch of the sermon will be found.

Edinburgh to be present at some scenes of public amusement. I told this anecdote, enlarging upon many things which it suggested with much liberty, and the impression seemed to be deeply affecting. The young men in my view, as soon as they heard me speaking of them, and had the eyes of the congregation turned upon them, withdrew from their position and came near, concealing themselves behind the church, where they no doubt heard what was said. The rich people, with *very few* exceptions, remained *to the end;* and some of them I thought seemed solemnly affected, at least for the time. Some of the most pointed appeals were addressed specially to them. Mr. B. seemed satisfied, and gave me encouragement to come to him again. Both he and Mr. C. of Moulin expressed themselves as agreeably disappointed, having expected to hear something very exciting, and not solid and sober.

"*Monday, September* 14*th.*—This day I spent chiefly alone, in letter-writing, &c., having no meeting in the evening. Oh! how sweet and profitable to my soul I find a day on which I have no public duty! Would that I had more such, if it were the Lord's holy will! In ordinary cases they would be absolutely indispensable, but when the Lord moves in so mighty and sovereign a manner as he is doing now, the mountains become a plain.

"*Wednesday, September* 16*th.*— . . . During the time of our meeting I noticed a farmer of the name of M'G. of H—— of Grandtully, come in and stand listening with the most rivetted attention to what was said. He was a rough-looking man, and one whom I noticed in this character the first night that I was at Grandtully, saying to myself, 'How wonderful it would be to see that man brought under conviction of sin.' From his appearance at Logierait on Sabbath, and now at this meeting, I entertained a hope that this might be the case. When I came out and met him, my hope was agreeably confirmed. Having to go from home on business, and being anxious to be at our meeting at Grandtully in the evening, he had set out very early, and was now returning in the utmost haste. When he heard that I was at Balnaguard he sent home his horse that he might be present and accompany me home. We accordingly had a good deal of solemn converse on the way. He seemed under deep concern, and pressed me to go in, though my time was nearly gone, and pray with them. I did so, and hardly had I entered when the room was filled with old and young, collected from the harvest-field. Without saying a word we joined in prayer, and so remarkably was the presence of God granted that all were in tears, and some cried aloud. After prayer I left this scene, which was certainly one that displayed the finger of God as much as any one in which I ever was, and walked home in company with R. D., a stepson of M'G.'s, and the boy who cried out in the church at Grandtully on the first night that I was there. He seems to continue under deep concern, and has got some comfort since that time. He went, dear boy, with me to carry my bag. When we had got to a considerable distance, a number of those who had been affected in the house came running across the fields to meet us again, weeping bitterly; but I did not encourage this, and sent them to secret prayer. I arrived at Grandtully by five o'clock, and hardly conscious of fatigue. 'The Lord will give strength to his people.' 'As thy days, so shall thy *strength* be!'"

Here we must reluctantly break off this remarkable and deeply interesting itinerarium. Remarkable and interesting I cannot doubt that it will be regarded by every Christian mind, however differently men may judge in regard to some of the points which it naturally raises for consideration. It brings indeed into the strongest relief at once that in him which in the view of all was most admirable, and that which was most peculiar, and, in the view of some, open to question. In particular the predominantly, sometimes almost exclusively subjective character of his ministry stands out in the broadest light. He spoke, apparently *could* speak, only what he felt, and that only while he felt it, and so far as he felt it. He must utter the very present experience and conviction of his soul, or be silent altogether. Out of the abundance of the heart alone could his mouth speak. The declaration of a mere intellectual belief, or remembered conviction of the past, seemed to him a mockery, and almost a falsehood. His preaching was thus in the strictest sense a cardiphonia—the voice of an instrument that could sound only as the breath of the eternal Spirit of God swept over it. Truths merely known, believed, arranged in logical sequence in the mind or in written discourse, was to him no message from God to human souls; but only truth "quick and powerful," and glowing in living fire within the heart. Most significant in this point of view are such expressions as these found in his journal: "I could not speak at that time *for the whole* world." He said afterwards to a friend (referring to an occasion at Moulin), "that the adversary of souls had been at his right hand the whole time; and that each statement which he sought to make from the Word of God seemed to be contradicted by a voice within as soon as made." At another time he felt as if the people might see through his very eyes the hypocrisy and falsehood of his heart, while he uttered mechanically the sound of words, the life and power of which he did not feel. I offer no opinion now in regard to the profound question here involved: whether the principle on which he acted was in itself just; or whether, if just for him, the course of action to which it led were a fit precedent and example for other men. The question is not even properly raised in this form, for his whole ministry during those remarkable years was so plainly exceptional that no warrantable inference can be drawn from his case to that of others. His function and vocation was rather that of the old prophets uttering from time to time the message and the "burden" given to them under the immediate impulse of the Spirit who gave it, than that of the priests whose lips ought at all times to keep knowledge, and to impart its sacred lessons to others even when for the time they enjoy not the full sweetness of it themselves. Even those who may think that the principle on which he acted was carried out by him to too extreme a point will scarcely deny the general truth, that however it may be with the other functions of the pastoral office—as of instruction, admonition, counsel, persuasion, consolation—for the special work of awakening souls an awakened and immediate sense of eternal realities is of all things most essential. It may be possible enough to explain a doctrine or enforce a duty without anything more than a general and habitual conviction of the truth involved, yet surely if we would make others weep we must weep ourselves. At least if in this matter he erred, he erred on a safer side than that of those who would divorce altogether the message of the preacher from the experience of the man, and who can discourse of the deepest and most sacred exercises of the soul with an equally free and fluent speech, with a cold and with a burning heart. Better a single word spoken in the spirit, than a thousand words of mere sounding breath; better to utter in a few broken sentences a real message from God, than to speak with the tongue of men and of angels a heartless, soulless message of our own.

After all it can scarcely be doubted that the extreme fluctuation of feeling and of consequent freedom of utterance manifested in these journals was in great measure owing to that exhaustion of the vital powers, and that lack of opportunity for studious meditation which the incessant labours of this period entailed; and that in more favourable circumstances his spiritual experiences might have been more equable, and his power in the pulpit more constant. It would appear from expressions which occur here and there in the journals that this was occasionally at least his own impression, and there is much in their general tenor which goes strongly to confirm that view. It is observable how often his times of deepest depression immediately succeeded his times of highest elevation, as though the one were at least in large measure the reaction of the other. The temporary quiescence of the feelings, equally with the corresponding languor of the bodily frame, was but the inevitable and even salutary result of the sudden unbending of the bow which had been too long and too tightly bent; and it was his trial rather than his error that he could, during these three remarkable years, so seldom obtain that needful restorative repose. It was in circumstances such as his that the gracious Master, who knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust, said to his disciples, when they were worn out with the greatness of their labours and with those manifold distractions which left them no leisure even to eat, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile." There was no such interval of retreat permitted to him now; but the enjoyment of that precious boon was reserved for another and not distant day.

CHAPTER IX.

1841—1844.

NEWCASTLE, EDINBURGH, DUBLIN.

During the next three years Mr. Burns was incessantly engaged in evangelistic work, partly in places which he had already visited, and partly in new fields. Of the latter the most conspicuous were Newcastle, Edinburgh, and Dublin, and to a brief notice of his labours there I propose to devote the present chapter. They were, of course, in most respects essentially similar to those which we have already described in Dundee and Aberdeen, but still possessed some features sufficiently distinct to deserve a separate, though less detailed record. At Newcastle, the first aspect of the field and his first trial of the work were not encouraging. I know not if the "sins and sorrows of the great city" be really greater there than in other communities of similar extent and character with which he had been before acquainted, but it seemed to him, at least, as if it were so. The giant forms of evil with which he had everywhere to contend, stood forth before the eye in more naked and unblushing prominence, as though iniquity were, in truth, too strong to feel ashamed or hide its face. He found himself in the presence of a power which, alike in its extent and terrible energy, startled and shocked him, and threw him back as scarce ever before on the power that is infinite and divine. "The people of God," he writes a few days after his arrival, "are rallying in their places, and we have them of every name on our side. Ah! but the LORD is with me as a mighty, terrible ONE. This is enough." "I ask it as a favour," he writes to his endeared friend Mr. Milne, "and *plead* for it, that you will lay before your people the case of Newcastle, an iron-walled citadel of Satan. Almighty power, and that alone, can make a breach and plant the banner of salvation in the Lamb on its proud ramparts. They *must* cry, they must wrestle; for the devil is in the field, and the day will be hot." While, too, "the enemy thus came in like a flood," it seemed to him as if the forces on the other side were comparatively few and feeble. "The Scotch Church," says he, "is low here; the audiences were not large. During the week I preached every night but Tuesday and Saturday, but chiefly to the church-going few, including some Christians, with a view to stir them up to come nearer to God. . . . Went out at meal hour and began to invite sinners. Very apathetic. The sleep of death is on the city."

The spell of apathy, however, was soon, at least partially, broken. The announcement of a Sabbath pleasure trip of a more than usually offensive kind having met his eye, his spirit was stirred within him, and he denounced it in a terrible placard, which he signed with his own name and posted up in every street and open place in Newcastle. It fell like a bomb-shell in the midst of the community, startled the ears alike of friends and foes, and drew general attention to the preacher and his message. A solemn tract on the sins of the city and the impending judgments of God was at the same time prepared and sown broadcast among the people. The newspapers too, both local and metropolitan, took up the matter, bitterly denounced his proceedings, and thus still more loudly rang the bell of alarm in the ears of a community from whom he only desired a hearing, even though they should strike while they heard him. "Newspapers and Socialistic placards," wrote his friend Mr. Bonar of Kelso, "have been making Edinburgh, and I suppose other places, ring with your doings in Newcastle." But he remained calm amid the storm, unmoved alike by the rage of enemies and by the doubts and fears of friends, so only the cause of Christ were helped, and not hindered. "The people in Scotland," said he, "are thinking that the opposition must be awful here. But it is like bomb-shells thrown over our heads and bursting at a distance. They know more of it in London than I do in Newcastle. 'Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.'"

Meanwhile, according to his wont, he soon exchanged the empty churches for the open and crowded streets—preaching to varying audiences and with varying tokens of success on the quay, at the 'Spital Square, in the Corn and Cloth Markets, in the open space beside the castle, sometimes in continuous and impressive discourse, sometimes in a running fire against Secularist or Romish objectors who started up as opponents from amongst the crowd; sometimes alone, and sometimes dividing the ground with the political lecturer or the puppet showman, who spread forth their rival wares at a few paces' distance. He had some encouragement, but no very marked or decisive evidence of blessing. He speaks from time to time of "solemn attention;" "very great attention and eagerness;" "a very large and deeply solemn audience;" "a large audience who stood rivetted to the end;" of a "service of three hours' duration, in the castle-yard where Whitfield preached of old;" "and would have remained almost till midnight;" "a considerable audience who continued immovable under darkness and rain;" "the people so much impressed that the stars were out in the sky before we separated;" "some of the old sailors on the quay weeping, and pressing their money on those who gave away the tracts at the end;" yet there were few or none who sought him out in private for spiritual counsel and instruction. Perhaps this might in part arise from the fact that his street audiences here consisted almost exclusively of men—the softer and more impressible sex having, as he suggests, either less curiosity, or more fear of noisy crowds, than in the cities of the north. Now and then, too, after all his labours were over, he would go forth into the dark streets, with a bundle of his "plain sentences" under his arm, that he might see the city in its midnight dress, look down into the depths of that abyss of ruin which for the love of God and man he so vehemently longed to sound, and it may be hold out the torch of life eternal to some poor wanderer whom he might never hope to meet at any other place or time. Strange scenes would sometimes on these occasions meet his eyes and ears: "I went out after coming into my room and with a bundle of the 'plain sentences' paraded some of the chief streets. In this I met with some strange incidents. I offered near the mouth of the Arcade a copy to a gentleman half-intoxicated. He swore fearfully and said, 'Oh, what a cursed country this is! I might go through every town on the Continent, and not meet with such another rascal as you infesting me. Rome is infinitely better than this,'" &c. On another occasion he writes: "After the meeting I spent a half-hour on the street with tracts, and met with awful proofs of the enormous wickedness of the people, also with many whose language amid their sins seemed almost to be, Oh! that I were saved, oh! that you could do me any good." One is reminded of the heathen in Tertullian's days, of whom he tells us that even their oaths and ejaculated utterances of grief and fear bore witness to their deep consciousness of God and of a higher world, and showed that the "testimony of the soul" was by its very nature on the side of Christ.[1] Sometimes conscience would still more distinctly speak and take part with the reprover against the sinner: "I spoke to three young gentlemen intoxicated; they mocked; but one of them, having separated from the rest, went along with me a short way. He then left me and whistled for his companions, but they had deserted him; and conscience-stricken he called after me, and when I went back asked where I was from, my name and residence, and promised to call on Friday at five P.M., saying with some feeling, 'he had much need of a lecture.'"

Still there was no deep and general impression, and even the partial interest that had been excited began after a season gradually to die down towards the former state of apathy. The congregations in church were small, the audiences in the open air less numerous and less solemn. The sensation created by the Sabbath placards was passing away, and no deeper and mightier influence apparently had come to supply its place. Even some of his friends, who had most sanguinely hoped for a rich and wide-spread blessing, began to lose heart. "I had hope at one time," said one of the most ardent of these, "but now I confess it is gone. Every ear seems closed." He himself too almost despaired. Receiving a letter from Mr. Parker, in which he expresses his astonishment that the people could bear his words, he writes in his journal bitterly, "Alas! the people can bear anything here as yet. The body seems so dead, that though you plunge the knife to the heart there is no pain." But it was only the lowest ebb, before the turning of the tide, and before another day had passed it was in full and buoyant flow. God had only made him utterly to despair of self, that he might the more simply and wholly triumph in Christ. A single passage must here be given, as affording a vivid picture of the nature of the hot battle which he had expected and which had come at last, and of the spirit in which he fought it:

---

[1] Testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ.

"*Thursday*, *September* 23*d*.—During the day I was very weak in body, and was tempted to think of *neglecting* an opportunity of doing good at the cattle-show, which is held here this day. But the passage turned up, 'If thou say, Behold, I knew it not,' &c., and I was compelled to go. I found that there was no opportunity for *preaching*, as the show was within a park, and the people outside were staying but a few minutes. Alas! perhaps it may be found in the day of God that there *was* opportunity. Certainly the showmen found an *opportunity* of attracting many. However, I *only* gave away tracts, spoke to the people here and there, and intimated that I would preach in the Cloth-market in the evening, which is at the end of the Corn-market, the place where, at three P.M., about a thousand were to dine together. The tracts were received by *high* and low. . . . After dinner I felt my strength of body *renewed*, and had hope of something being done of God in the evening. A little after six we went to the scene of action, and found a great crowd around the place, many of them trying to see *in* through the windows, and multitudes waiting for the music at intervals. I thought of heaven lighted with the brightness of a thousand suns, and of poor lost souls longing to be in when it is too late, and forced to hear from afar the joyful praises of the redeemed, loud as the noise of many waters. We had no sooner begun than an immense crowd gathered round. Some of the enemies were enraged and urged the police to interfere, crying, 'Down with him, down with him.' The policeman told me that the people were disturbed by us within, but this was so absurd that he did not insist on it; and as he could not find us guilty of a breach of the *peace*, he soon went away. But although the enemy could not oppose us by *legal* force, they did not cease to show their deadly hatred of what was said and done. Once a stone was thrown, again a quantity of manure, which bespattered my clothes. Afterwards, *in the time of prayer*, when we were prevailing against them *without hand*, they raised a burst of horrid laughter, and pushed the crowd at the side on me with the view of overthrowing the pulpit. At this time I had to pause in the prayer, and when I began to tell them that they could do *nothing* without the Lord's *permission*, and that all they did would promote his cause, &c., they were quieted for a time; and I was led out to speak with greater power, perhaps, than ever before in Newcastle, putting the sword into the very heart and bowels of the town's iniquities. At this time, and ever after it until ten o'clock, when we parted, there was the greatest solemnity, and a *deep* impression; and though I was frequently interrupted with questions, they *all* tended to bring out in a *marvellous* way the truth of God, so that they who put them were silenced and the people rejoiced. During the first hour and half we were obliged to contend, at intervals, with a tumult of people all around the music in the Corn-market, and the movements of a travelling-show taking up its encampment close to us. Even amid those trials, although increased by the contradiction of sinners, I was enabled *not* to waver nor faint; afterward, however, the meeting in the market broke up, the show people were quiet, the streets were nearly empty, and we worshipped the Lord amid solemn silence for another hour and half. At this time the singing was truly sublime; and the whole scene, when contrasted with what it had lately been, was fitted to deepen the impression of the word in the hand of the Spirit. I did not speak on any text, but used the various circumstances of the feast so near as to set off by way of comparison and contrast the feast of fat things on Mount Zion. I did not proceed *regularly*, but from time to time noticed such topics as these:—That feast is for the body, this is for the soul; that is one of which you easily take too much, in this you cannot *exceed;* that is soon over, this will last *eternally;* that would tire and nauseate if often repeated, this becomes sweeter every day; that is only open to those who can pay for a place, this is provided freely for the poor: it is made *free* not because it is of *little* value, but because it is *so* costly that *no money* can buy it, and in order that it may be a feast for *all;* that is made on bullocks and fatlings, but this, oh! wonder of wonders, is made on the body and blood of God's own Son; the greatest sinners are welcome to it *now*, and the greater they have been they will sit nearer the head of the table as honoured guests, in order that the more the grace and mercy of Jehovah may be displayed to view! These and similar points gave ground from time to time for varied information to the mind, and appeals to the conscience which seemed to arrest many; and the effect of this was aided by the many truths which were from time to time drawn out by the questions and objections of enemies. One man cried there was *no* hell, and demanded a definition of it. He was answered, 'If thy right hand offend thee,' &c., and remained silent. Another said there were no devils, and this was the occasion of tearing away the veil from the iniquities of the town, and exposing *their* power over men in its deformity and dreadfulness. Many in different ways tried to vex us, but this explained the text, 'Consider him who endured,' &c., and gave us ground for praise that we had *not yet* resisted unto *blood.* Nay, one shameless man, whose question the *people* would hardly bear, asked me, 'How are *you* supported?' a matter of general wonder. I answered him that I never needed to ask a penny from any one, but that even since I came *here* £10 had been sent to me unasked, and partly without a name![1] They seemed confounded.

---

[1] It may be right to state here once for all, that from the time of his leaving Dundee until his departure for China, he relied wholly on such support as was spontaneously sent to him by those who desired to further his special work. The result was that while his own immediate wants were amply supplied, he seldom lacked sufficient also to contribute liberally in behalf of Christ's cause and Christ's poor. The above is given as a specimen of such entries in regard to this matter as occur from time to time in his journal. The following is the first of these, of

At ten o'clock we asked the parting blessing and separated—indeed only for a moment, for when I got to the lamp I took out my Bible to look at a verse, and the whole crowd gathered round and stood with breathless attention while I read what God had sent me, 'None of these things move me,' &c., and told them some things about my own conversion. We then parted, and it would not have been so soon, had not the policeman desired it.

"Though I spoke nearly four hours amid such difficulties in the open air I was not fatigued, and am well to-day. Oh! that I were only well in soul, and fit to renew the combat. Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly! Amen! Amen! Glory to Jehovah!

"*P.S.*—When I came into my room and looked at the Bible which was lying open, my eye rested on Psalm cxi. 4, 5. Oh! how glorious and how seasonable it was! 'He hath made his *wonderful* works to be *remembered;* the Lord is *gracious*, and *full* of compassion. He hath *given* meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of *his covenant!*' Halleluiah!"

After visiting several other places in the north of England, and among others Sunderland, where he preached "to a dense and hungry audience, who seemed to open the mouth wide for the blessing," he returned to Scotland, in order to take the temporary charge of the congregation of St. Luke's, Edinburgh, in the absence of his valued friend Mr. Moody Stuart. Of his labours here I am happy to be able to present the following graphic account from the pen of a friend to whom I have been already indebted, and who then watched his footsteps with deep and sympathetic interest:—

"In the winter of 1841-2 Mr. Burns supplied the pulpit of St.

---

date, Perth, January, 1840: "Received £1 from a friend for personal expenses, making now in all, given me since I ceased from my engagement at Dundee, £53. So wonderfully is the Lord providing for all my wants! Praise! Oh Lord! deliver me from covetousness, and enable me with overflowing gratitude and joy to give all that I don't require to promote the extension of thy blessed kingdom in this poor ruined world. Amen."

Luke's, Edinburgh. Mr. Moody Stuart, owing to an affection of the voice, had been advised to spend the winter in Madeira, and Mr. Burns was requested to take his place. He began his work in Edinburgh on the 14th November, preaching in the forenoon from 2 Co. iv. 1–6; and Dr. Bruce of St. Andrew's Church (of whom he always spoke with filial affection) in the afternoon.

"The work of this winter forms a unique chapter in his life. A special interest attaches to it. He had to become both pastor and evangelist. True to the motto of his family, 'Ever ready,' he soon showed that he could be both. He at once began a course of lectures on the Sabbath forenoon upon the Epistle to the Romans, and another course at the Thursday prayer-meeting upon the Epistle of James. On Monday evening he taught two classes: a female class for expounding the miracles, and a young men's class at a later hour, where he took up the parables of Christ. Every Saturday afternoon he conducted a class for children. Two courses of lectures—three classes—sermons upon the Sabbath afternoon suggested by the special circumstances of the times or of the congregation: here was sufficient work for an ordinary man. But he was no ordinary man. He was always longing to be on full work again. The college session had begun. He taught a private Greek class in his lodgings.[1] The College Missionary Association met every Saturday morning for prayer and the reading of essays upon topics connected with foreign missions. He attended these meetings, and by the blessing of God infused his own fire into the hearts of many of the students. At the concluding general meeting of the Association, when about two hundred students were present, he moved one of the resolutions, and it was the universal impression that there never had been such a meeting in the college before.

"A large number of students attended his ministry—not only divinity students, but gownsmen of all stages with their pale eager faces. Memory recalls such names as Alexander James Campbell, John Donaldson, John Craven, Alexander Thain, Frederick Sandeman, Robert Ireland, Robert Taylor, Duncan

---

[1] During the winter of 1844 he also taught a Hebrew class in the New College, for the benefit of the pupils of his revered friend, Dr. Duncan.

Maclaren, M. Macgregor,[1] Walter Davidson, Donald Sutherland, Patrick Neill, William Balfour, Neil Macleod, A. Luke, Thomas Gardiner, Thomas Just, &c. He invited them to his lodgings; he sympathized with their difficulties; he guided those who were groping in the dark and seeking the way to Zion. Those who had the rare privilege of meeting him in private, and seeing his close walk with God, were at no loss to understand the power which attended his public ministrations.

"With him the winning of souls was a passion; calm, but intense, consuming. As Foster has said of John Howard, 'It was the calmness of an intensity kept uniform by the nature of the human mind forbidding it to be more, and by the character of the man forbidding it to be less.' He cast his net into all waters. He wished to get access to the soldiers in the castle. He visited the barracks, distributed tracts, and invited them to his open-air services in the High Street. He frequently visited the Shelter, the jail, the bridewell, the Magdalene Asylum, the Orphan Hospital, the Dean Bank Institution, &c., and preached to the inmates. Wherever the lost or neglected were to be found he was there; like Him who yearned over a world plunged in sin, telling them of rest for the weary and hope for the guilty. From the very refuse of society he gathered jewels for Emmanuel's crown. Very touching to see him, as I have done, giving tracts and speaking tender words to the fallen. To him they were lost pieces of silver; and the thought that they might even yet have Christ for their brother, and heaven for their home, filled him with a tenderness which he had no name for.

"In the midst of his abundant labours in Edinburgh, the Lord opened a wide door for him in Leith. From January to March he preached on Wednesday and frequently on Sabbath evening in North Leith, South Leith, and the Mariners' Church, to densely crowded and (to use a favourite word of his own) 'hungry' audiences. The weather was severe—keen frost and snow—but the interest swelled and spread until the attendance even on the Wednesday evening was overflowing, and so deep was the impression that the people could not go away after the blessing. An after-service for prayer and directing anxious inquirers had to be held; and such was their distress that they had to be removed to the vestry, where he sought to give them 'the oil of joy for mourning.' Mr. M'Cheyne took part in one of these services, and spoke and prayed with the anxious. It seemed as if the ever-memorable scenes of Kilsyth, Dundee, and Perth were to be repeated in Leith. So wide-spread was the impression, that a gay lady in Leith said the people were all going mad. In his young communicants' class he soon gathered in abundant fruits of his labours in Leith—sheaves of joy. To use his own words, 'The Lord gave him spring, summer, and harvest, that winter in Leith.' About the middle of March, in consequence of the resolution of the directors of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway to run trains upon the Sabbath, he 'bade the people of Leith farewell for a season, in order that he might give his whole heart to the work in Edinburgh.'

---

[1] Late minister of the Free Church, Gartly.

"One memorable incident which belongs to his work in Leith I must not omit. He wished to get access to the sailors. One Sabbath afternoon Dr. Gordon agreed to take his place in St. Luke's, and he ran down to preach on the quay at Leith, taking two or three of us with him to distribute tracts and invite the sailors. It was on the 2d January, 1842. He stood half-way between the upper and lower bridges. I was never more struck with his tact and fertility of resource. A large crowd assembled —a sea of bronzed faces. After reading his text—Ecclesiastes viii. 11: 'Because sentence against an evil work,' &c.—it began to rain heavily. He paused, and prayed that God would restrain the clouds that the people might hear the word. The rain continued, however, and we adjourned to a large shed at the head of the quay. He resumed, and the rain ceased. I shall never forget the look of wonder with which that crowd gazed on the clear sky. They plainly felt that there is something deeper in prayer than is dreamed of in human philosophy. The preacher spoke as if he had spent his life before the mast: his skilful use of sea-phrases gave rare zest to his discourse; and, rising to a climax, he cried, 'Sailors! the breakers are ahead! the storm is rising! you are running upon a lee-shore! in a few moments the ship (the world) will strike and go down! The life-boat is Christ!

It is lying alongside—it is ready to move off! Come away, sailors, come away, or it will be too late!'

"It was on Sabbath the 13th of March that the first Sabbath train was run between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Mr. Burns' spirit was stirred to its depths in connection with this question. His zeal for God and his love for his country were 'as a burning fire shut up in his bones.' He regarded the Sabbath as the palladium of Scottish Christianity. In name of the session of St. Luke's he wrote a remonstrance to the shareholders, setting forth the 'fearful iniquity' of trampling upon the sacred day, and the 'awful judgments' which it must inevitably bring down upon the land. He attended the two great meetings held in the Hopetoun Rooms and in the West Church, by the friends of the Sabbath, to oppose the opening of the railway; and spoke with great thankfulness of the powerful speeches of Drs. Cunningham, Candlish, and C. J. Brown, and Messrs. D. T. K. Drummond and Makgill Crichton, in favour of the entire sanctification of the Lord's-day. He preached for several Sabbaths upon the subject, and discussed it in all its aspects; he prayed with even more than his wonted fervour, that He who saith to the sea, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed,' would arrest the advancing tide of Sabbath desecration; and he intimated that he would preach at the railway-station every Sabbath at seven in the morning and at six in the evening—the hours at which the trains were advertised to start.

"True to his word, he was at the railway-station at seven o'clock on the following Sabbath morning. He spoke of it as 'a momentous day in the history of Scotland.' A great crowd assembled, and joined with deep solemnity in the service. It was after nine before they dispersed, some of them in tears. He conducted the ordinary services in St. Luke's, at eleven and two, with unusual tenderness and power, as if the morning service had only put a keener edge upon his spirit; and was at the railway-station again at six, surrounded by a dense concourse of several thousands. The station was then at the Haymarket, in the outskirts of Edinburgh; and as the *bruit* spread, the people poured out to hear this extraordinary man, as they once did to hear the

Baptist in the wilderness. Like a soldier mounting the breach, or leading a forlorn hope, he stood upon a large stone, and sang the Psalm:—

> 'Horror took hold on me, because
> Ill men thy law forsake,' &c.,

and preached one of his most characteristic sermons to a deeply impressed audience. He continued till nine o'clock in the evening, having been about nine hours engaged altogether. For the next three months his usual Sabbath work was four services—two at the railway-station and two in St. Luke's. He was often engaged for eight or nine hours—he often had to raise his voice so as to be heard by thousands; and yet he used to say that he was as fresh on Monday as on Saturday. He was 'a wonder to many.' Like Ezekiel, he was set for a sign. His brethren in Edinburgh were full of joy at his lion-like courage and noble testimony; and only wished that they had bodily strength to stand by his side. As he himself said, Even if no good was done to souls by these services, the lifting up of a bold testimony for the Lord's-day in the hearing of thousands, and in the face of the world, was a work worth living and dying for.

"So grave did he consider the crisis to be that he resolved to hold meetings for prayer every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at noon—to preach in the open-air at other points—and to turn his female class into an evangelistic service in the church. It is not easy even to recount his labours from this date. And instead of being worried or hackneyed, his soul, like Gideon's fleece, was drenched with dew, and his preaching was never marked by greater depth, variety, and freshness. It was the culminating point of his work in Edinburgh. The church was overflowing. The word was sharper than a two-edged sword. There was a Bethel-like fear over the congregation. Every head was bowed. It was felt that 'the living God was in the place.' Some who had entertained prejudices against the preacher were ashamed when they found that solidity and impressiveness were the leading characteristics of his teaching. At the spring communion two hundred joined from other congregations. In his young communicants' classes he met continually with deeply interesting cases of persons recently awakened, and heard of others. At the close of a Monday prayer-meeting some remained behind, who seemed to be under 'a divine convincing work;' and as they went away, one of the elders said with sparkling eyes, 'That's the Lord's work beginning.' And so it was. The day alone will declare the fruits of that winter's work. If the Spirit did not come down as a rushing mighty wind, yet the promise was fulfilled in abundant measure, 'I will be as the dew unto Israel.' What the old chronicler said of the effects of Richard Cameron's preaching, might be said of Mr. Burns' preaching on not a few of those Sabbaths in St. Luke's: 'The people fell into a state of calm weeping.'

"I have said nothing of his Sabbath-evening services in the Queen's Park, or of the solemn meetings he addressed at the end of the old Tolbooth Church in the High Street, where there were manifest tokens of the divine presence, and where beyond doubt fruit was gathered unto life eternal. I have said nothing of his quick eye in seizing opportunities of dropping a word in season, in the house and in the street, on coach or track-boat, to any one whom the thousand eddies and swirls of daily life threw in his way. I have said nothing of four evangelistic tours which he made in the midst of his Edinburgh work—one in April, 1842, to Milnathort, Bridge of Earn, Perth, Burrelton, Collace, Abernyte, Dundee; another in June, to Dundee, Kilspindie, Anstruther, Logie, Cupar-Fife, and Falkland; and two in August and September to the Highlands of Perthshire. One recalls it with amazement. Here was a man who crowded the work of years into months—of months into weeks—of weeks into days. The work of many a lifetime was compressed into this single winter in Edinburgh. He often spoke as if he had a presentiment that his exhausting labours would soon wear out the earthly tabernacle, and he hasted to do the work of Him that sent him.

"My space is done, else I could give fragments of his 'Meditations' which I still vividly remember—morsels of living bread which the Master had blessed and broken. In digging in the field of the Word he threw up now and again great nuggets, which formed part of one's spiritual wealth ever after. A mind of keen insight and power—he was given to study subjects rather than texts, so that if he studied one text he sometimes preached from another—and always longing to resume those habits of close and consecutive study which he pursued until he was carried away by the tide. He was a great puzzle to students—his work, his circumstances, and his methods were so exceptional; but those who were so minded could learn from him the greatest lesson of all for the work of the ministry—the *omnipotence of faith and prayer.*

"For reasons which I suppress, I had the privilege of seeing him often in private—generally twice a week. Little notes, too, he used to send me; and although I have lost them, their contents are written 'as if in star-fire' on my heart. Here is one. He had asked me to breakfast, but was unexpectedly called from home. He left a note expressing his regret, and adding, 'We are often disappointed in our meetings with man, but never in our meetings with God at a throne of grace, where we are ever welcome in the blood of Jesus.' In another, written from Dublin, he says—'May the Lord carry on his own great work within and around us, and may we be enabled to glorify him in life and in death!' The very last words, I think, I ever heard from him—standing at his father's door one night in 1854, under cold November skies—were, 'We must run!'"

Allusion has been made to those rapid excursions to other fields which occasionally interrupted the more even tenor of his labours at St. Luke's. Of the incessant and exhausting toil which such excursions involved no one acquainted only with the ordinary scenes of evangelistic work can easily form a conception. A single specimen, therefore, we must give, and we do so all the more readily that it will carry us back for a moment amid the scenes of his former labours in Breadalbane and Strathtay:—

"To one with an exact knowledge of the geography of Perthshire," says the same eye-witness, to whom I am indebted for the above notices, "his labours during the week from Sabbath the 14th August, 1842, to Sabbath the 21st inclusive, furnish one of the most extraordinary episodes even in his life. There were no railroads then in Perthshire, but he had an interesting fellow-labourer in the shape of a fine fast trotter, as worthy of the name of 'Church Extension' as Mr. M'Cheyne's pony. He was a famous rider, and sat his horse like a knight. On Sabbath the 14th he preached at Blair-Athole (1) for five hours in the churchyard to an assembly of at least 4000 persons, and (2) in the evening in the church for three hours to an audience that would have remained till daybreak. On Monday evening he rode to Moulin, and preached (3) to a deeply affected audience. On Tuesday he rode to Kinloch-Rannoch (20 miles), and preached (4) in a park at the south end of the bridge, from two to five o'clock, to an interesting congregation of shepherds, gamekeepers, foresters, graziers, cattle-dealers, &c., gathered from both sides of Loch Rannoch. After a hurried dinner he struck across the west shoulder or Schiehallion, one of the most trackless and difficult passes in the Highlands—taking a guide part of the way, to Fortingall (18 miles); rode six miles farther to Lawers, crossed Loch Tay to Ardeonaig—preached (5) there on Wednesday at twelve, and recrossing the lake preached (6) at Lawers the same evening. On Thursday he rode down to Grandtully (17 miles), and (7) preached with great power in the churchyard to a dense crowd from Hebrews xii. 18–25. On Friday he rode up to Fortingall (12 miles), where he preached (8) in the open air from two to nearly six p.m., a sermon (Hebrew ix. 27, 28) which made a deep impression, many of the audience being in tears; and returned to Grandtully the same evening. On Saturday morning he started at six for Balnaguard, preached (9) there at seven o'clock to a large company, many of whom had got saving good under his ministry previously—caught the mail-cart at half-past eight, reached Edinburgh in the evening, and preached thrice (10, 11, 12) in St. Luke's on the following day.

"The congregation at Blair-Athole on the 14th," continues our informant, "was a most imposing sight. Most of them were men, and the ground being a dead level, and inconvenient for sitting, most of them stood. The thirst to hear was so intense, and the blessing which had crowned his previous visits so wide-spread, that almost the whole population, not only from the vale of Athole, but from Straloch, Strathardle, Kirkmichael, Glenerochy, Dalnacardoch, Foss, Glenfincastle, Strathtay, and Strath-tummel, flocked to hear the great preacher of repentance. As he read the opening Psalm, Ps. xxii. 27–31—

'All ends of th' earth remember shall,
And turn the Lord unto,' &c.,

and during the first prayer, you felt as if the light of the other world struck on his face. His text was John xviii. 11, 'The cup which my Father,' &c.: and as he proceeded to explain the emblem, 'the cup,' he said, 'Wine is the strength or essence of the grape. God's wrath is his whole being *as directed against sin.* He looks upon sin as infinitely base and vile, and therefore he is indignant: and the wine of his holy anger is poured out *in all its strength* into the cup of his indignation. This wine was not diluted when the cup was put into the hand of the Son of God. Look at the anguish sin has wrought. The tears of mankind have never ceased to flow since it entered the world. No sooner do they dry on one cheek than they begin to run down the other: no sooner does one widow lay aside her weeds, than another begins the wail: and yet *one diluted drop* of God's wrath has done it all. What anguish, then, must have been in the cup which the Father gave his Son to drink!' Words like these cut deep into many a heart that day. I saw a white-haired old man in the gate weeping bitterly, and saying, 'Oh! it's his prayers: I canna stand his prayers!'

Between the scenes now described and those to which we have next to refer, great and startling events had taken place. The ancient and venerable Church of Scotland, of which Mr. Burns had been an attached and faithful member, had been broken in pieces, and from its ruins had arisen a new and powerful society with which a large proportion of her most devoted sons had cast in their lot. With the movement which led to that remarkable revolution, and with the principles which lay at the foundation of it, he most thoroughly sympathized; and when the critical day of exodus arrived we find him hurrying away from the busy scenes of his evangelistic work in Fife, that he might witness that signal and illustrious act of faith, and share the inspiration and the triumph of that solemn hour:—"Tuesday," he writes in his journal, "to Edinburgh per steam through a great storm on the way to the Assembly. Thursday, I was honoured to join in the solemn procession of ministers, &c., from St. Andrew's Church to the Free Assembly Hall, Canonmills, walking between my father on the one side and Uncle George of Tweedsmuir on the other. This was a scene of which I know not what to say! The opening of the Free Assembly was graciously solemn. Surely the Lord was there." But the scenes which immediately after followed, though deeply important and spirit-stirring, were not perhaps peculiarly favourable to the quiet prosecution of his special work. The country was all astir and filled with the din of ecclesiastical reconstruction and organization, and though this enthusiasm of church life and church work was itself of most wholesome influence on the general interests of religion in the country, and indeed, as it is believed, lent an impulse to the spiritual life of many, never to be forgotten, it was scarcely in unison with the peculiar mission of one whose one exclusive theme was that of repentance and the second birth. While therefore he still unweariedly prosecuted his appointed work wherever the divine Master seemed to point the way, he yet felt that the auspicious season for such work had in a great measure, at least for the present, passed. It was a time not so much for the awakening of life, as for the exercising and turning to good account of the life already awakened—a birth-time rather for the collective church than for individual souls. There was, indeed, abundant and most momentous work to be done, but work not precisely of that kind for which he felt himself especially fitted, and to which he believed himself to have been by the irresistible call of God specially devoted. It was his part not to rear, or even materially to assist in rearing, the outward fabric of the house of God, but to help by God's grace in gathering the living stones of which it was to be reared. He was the more willing accordingly to listen to calls which were coming to him, with increasing frequency and urgency, from fields that lay beyond the sphere of the existing movement, and among these from Dublin, where he found himself on Saturday, April 6th, 1844, under the hospitable roof of his valued friend the Rev. Dr. Kirkpatrick, one of the ministers of Mary's Abbey Church. The following graphic and deeply interesting narrative, for which I am indebted to his kind host, will give some idea of the nature of his labours, and his manner of life in this new and untried field:—

"I had seen your brother in Perth, and had invited him to my house in Dublin. He accepted my invitation; and after he had finished his immediate engagements in Scotland he suddenly appeared at my door, with a small bundle in his hand, containing the whole of his travelling apparatus. His principal object in coming to Dublin was to find opportunities, if possible, of making known to Roman Catholics the message of the gospel. Accordingly he selected as the place of his public labours a suitable piece of ground in front of the custom-house; a place in which Father Matthew had administered the temperance pledge, and where he could address his audience without obstructing the ordinary thoroughfare. This area was surrounded by a low chain fence, inside of which he stood on a chair, and spoke to the people, who occupied the space between him and the building. Here he took his position evening after evening, and amidst innumerable annoyances and interruptions he sought to bring before his ignorant and prejudiced hearers the word of eternal life. It requires no small amount of courage, and tact, and temper, as every one knows who has made the trial, to address an unsympathizing or hostile Irish mob. Mr. Burns was exposed to many opprobrious salutations, derisive questionings, vehement denials of the statements which he made; sometimes the uproar was so loud and long-continued that he was obliged to desist altogether; often his clothes were torn; not seldom the chair on which he stood was broken; but he never was impatient, nor ever for a moment lost his self-command. Amidst the most noisy and turbulent scenes, his countenance was beaming with joy, insomuch that some of his persecutors were constrained to say, 'He is a good man; we cannot make him angry.' The ringleaders of the mob occasionally joined hands, and rushed down upon him for the purpose of driving him from the chair, or of throwing him down upon the street; but he was always protected from the danger of these assaults by a body-guard of three young men, members of my congregation, who were never absent from these meetings; and who, standing behind him, caught him in their arms till the wave had passed by and spent its force; and then, having set him on the chair again, he proceeded in his address with as much quietude of manner as if no interruption had taken place. The questions interjected by the crowd from time to time, while he was perhaps in the middle of a sentence, were sufficient to perplex a speaker of less experience and of less self-control than Mr. Burns. Let me give some specimens of the style of interrogation to which he was subjected in the course of his addresses:—'What book is that which you hold in your hands?'—'It is the Word of God.' 'How do you know? can you prove that it is the Word of God?'—'I shall prove that it is if you deny it; but if we both of us admit it to be from God, why need I stop to prove it?' 'What is your commission?'—'I shall read it to you, my friends, 'Let him that heareth say, Come.' Eleven years have now passed since I heard the Lord speaking to my heart, and saying 'Come,' and ever since I have been saying 'Come' to as many sinners as were willing to listen to me.' 'You may go; we don't want you here.'—'My friends, it is to those who don't want me that I am always most anxious to go, for I find that they are the people who have most need of me.' 'Bravo!' shouted some one in the crowd, pleased with the readiness and appropriateness of the reply. 'From what country do you come?'—'From Scotland.' 'Have you no sinners there?'—'Yes.' 'Have you not much drunkenness in Scotland?'—'Yes, a good deal.' 'Why did you not stay at home to convert the drunkards before you came over to teach us?'—'For this reason: in Scotland the drunkards know that they are sinners, and do not attempt to justify themselves in their sins. But here I see people who curse, and drink, and tell lies, who say, nevertheless, that theirs is the true religion. Now these people must be labouring under a great mistake, and I have come to set them right in this matter.' 'But *our* church is the true church, and we have our priests to teach us and to keep us right.'—'My friends, your saying that you are members of the true church does not prove that you really belong to it. Let me read you a passage from the Word of God. John viii. 39, 44: 'They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus said unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.' This passage fell upon them like a thunderbolt, and silenced them for a season, while the speaker in the meantime pursued his address. The scenes described in the Gospels under the preaching of the Word were thus vividly illustrated, and to some extent re-enacted, under the ministry of Mr. Burns.

"On one occasion he proposed to vary the commencement of his open-air service by the singing of a psalm. I endeavoured to dissuade him from his purpose, by representing to him, that as his audience knew nothing of our metrical psalms, nor of our psalmody, his attempt to sing would serve but to increase and embitter the spirit of opposition. He was anxious, however, to make the experiment, and announced the 62d Psalm. After reading a portion of the psalm, he commenced to sing the 5th verse,

'My soul, wait thou with patience
Upon thy God alone.'

The crowd, taken by surprise, listened to the first line in mute astonishment; then burst into a laugh of derision; then forming themselves into a compact phalanx, they rushed down upon Mr. Burns just as he had completed the first two words of the second line. The three friends, who were ever near, drew him aside till the crowd swept by, and after a considerable interval placed him once more upon the chair; and he then, with his usual composure, resumed the tune at the part of the line, 'thy God alone,' which he had reached before he was interrupted.

"One evening, when he was obliged to stop short in his discourse in consequence of his chair being broken, he went down along the quay on the other side of the river, for the purpose of addressing himself to the coal-porters. It was in vain that his friends represented the danger to which he would be inevitably exposed; he replied, that 'he had never known fear.' His courage was soon put to the test. Whenever he commenced to speak, an angry mob quickly assembled, and loud and threatening shouts drowned all his efforts to be heard. The police came to his assistance, and kindly but firmly required him to cease. Still he was unwilling to give up the attempt, but after several ineffectual efforts, the mob becoming larger and more ferocious, the police peremptorily insisted that he should be silent and cross the river in the ferry-boat; 'for if you attempt to go back along the quay,' they said, 'we will not be answerable for your life.' 'But I cannot pay for the ferry-boat.' 'It will cost you only a halfpenny.' 'But I have no halfpenny,' he replied. 'Here is one for you,' said a good-natured policeman. Accordingly Mr. Burns stepped down into the boat, and holding up the halfpenny, he cried out to the people on shore, 'See this, my friends, I have got a free passage. In like manner you may have a free gospel, a free forgiveness of all your sins, a free passage to the kingdom of heaven. Without money, and without price.' And thus he proceeded to deliver a message to the persons who were crossing with him in the boat.

"It is not to be concluded from these details, that his labours in this arduous field were wholly unsuccessful. One Sabbath morning, his audience at the custom-house were more quiet than usual. His subject was regeneration: 'Except a man be born again,' &c. At the close of his sermon, a man who had been listening attentively said, 'Well, sir, if what you have said be true, you had much need to come from Scotland to tell it to us, for we never heard of this doctrine before.' After Mr. Burns left Dublin, several Roman Catholics came to inquire about him, speaking respectfully of his labours, and of the loving and genial spirit in which they were conducted.

"During his stay in Dublin we had prayer-meetings in the church of Mary's Abbey almost every day. The prayers of Mr. Burns were very striking—distinguished by deep acquaintance with Scripture, by intense fervour, and by strong faith. He truly pleaded with God, and occasionally seemed to get near access to his presence. But his addresses to our Presbyterian people failed to produce much visible impression. His failure in this respect disappointed and grieved me very much. The congregation looked forward to his promised visit with much interest; having been largely informed of the wonderful success which God had vouchsafed to him in many districts of Scotland, they expected to hear from him a fuller exposition, and a more specific application of scriptural truth, than he was wont to give; and they were somewhat dissatisfied to observe that his discourses appeared to be wholly extemporaneous. I tried to induce him to give some time to special preparation, but without success, and regarding his course of procedure as beyond the range of ordinary men, I forbore to press my objections. I continued, however, to think that he was mistaken in expecting that his word would be with power when he did not beforehand consider how to divide and to apply it; and that he was also mistaken in attributing his want of success, as he was at that time accustomed to do, solely and exclusively to the hardness of the hearts of the people. His views on these points, I think I have since learned, subsequently underwent considerable change; and I am sure that he was prepared to adopt any means which appeared to him most directly and effectively to bear on the advancement of the kingdom of God. This great object alone engrossed him. Political or even ecclesiastical affairs had no attraction for him. He was bent earnestly and ever on the salvation of souls. This grand concern occupied and absorbed his daily prayers, his social converse, his public addresses, the whole course of his thoughts, the whole business of his life. Why are there not more of us like him? The need of such men is as urgent as ever; and we know that the grace of God is not less rich, nor his promises in Christ less sure, nor his gifts less varied or less rich. 'Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief.'"

The following brief snatch of reminiscence by a respected minister of the Free Church of Scotland,[1] gives another vivid touch to the picture, and affords a pregnant hint as to the unseen results of those despised and self-denying labours:—

"I only saw him once in Dublin. I was then a student in Trinity College, and I remember well, passing along by the custom-house, I came upon a crowd which, as I drew near, appeared greatly excited. I stopped to listen, and I found that William Burns (as I afterwards came to know) was addressing them. I think I see him still: with what a strange calmness he spoke! with what meekness he met all their taunts! He was hooted, pelted, insulted, but quite unmoved he held open his Bible, and answered every onset by saying, 'But hear me—hear what God says to us in his blessed Word.' I remember he was speaking from John x. concerning the good Shepherd and the door of the sheepfold. At times the crowd were quieted down to listen, and *one* at least of the hearers walked away, forgetting for the time Greek iambics and mathematical deductions, but filled with the thought, 'That stranger has a peace and a life of which I know nothing.' Next time we met was at the Duchess of Gordon's, Huntly Lodge, on his return on a visit from China; and I have never forgotten that happy season, or his last words, as, entering the railway-carriage, he said, 'Now for China!'"

One or two characteristic extracts from his own journal will carry us still deeper into the heart of the combat and of the combatant:—

"*Tuesday Evening.*—During this day my path has opened a little, or rather not a little, farther. During the former part of the day I wrote letters to Scotland. Was alone with the Lord, and also traversed the city that I might get a full view of its character, naturally and morally, which is always most easily done before you become known. I conversed with Mr. Drysdale, the elder to whom I before alluded as a man of God. . . . I spent an hour with him in his workshop alone. He gave me an awful account of the difficulties of out-door preaching in Dublin; but after much converse I felt that I must make the attempt. He would gladly have gone with me, but was engaged this evening at the great meeting in connection with the Presbyterian marriage question, and thus I was left quite alone. However I went, looking to the Lord, and took up my position on the open ground to the west of the custom-house, laid my hat on the ground, and standing a few paces from the footpath began to read, 'It is appointed unto men once to die,' &c. I had soon a large and most interesting assembly, but, as usual, the Romanists introduced their questions, and when the answers came too near them they began to make a rush with the view of putting me down. A police-officer also came and advised me to remove. I said I believed that I was trespassing no law—that that was the ground where Father Matthew spoke—and that I would not remove unless he had authority to stop me. He seemed to be a Romanist, and was evidently set on putting me down, so that after throwing the responsibility on him, and telling the people where I would preach to-morrow, I came away with a disburdened conscience. Dear people! they seemed intent on hearing, and followed me far on my way home despite of all I could do. . . .

---

[1] The Rev. H. M. Williamson, Free High Church, Aberdeen.

"*Friday, April* 12*th.*—Half-past one o'clock this morning I awoke under a powerful assault of despondency and unbelief—tempted to say, Let me sit still and take things in the ordinary way. However, at worship, the fifth chapter of Hebrews, read by Mr. K., particularly the words, 'Be followers of them who through *faith* and *patience* are now inheriting the promises,' quickened me again. We had some interesting conversation on the need of perseverance, and of in this taking a lesson from O'Connell; and at half-past nine I went down in the name of Jesus to the scene of last night's meeting. I asked one captain to give me his ship to preach in, but he refused. I was then standing in doubt to what ship to go to next, when I saw some poor Romanists — emigrants, I suppose — on board another vessel, who seemed to know me, and were mocking. I asked them how they were so unwilling to hear the word of God; they said they loved it, but not from me—that I could not preach it,

&c. This opened the way. With all their confidence they mingled many oaths, which I told them certainly showed that they were not on the right way. A crowd gathered, and I had the best hour among them that I have had in Dublin. I was greatly aided in gaining their confidence. They threatened to throw me into the river at first, but I told them I did not mind that—they treated my Master worse. One asked me for my commission; I pointed to 'Let him that heareth say, Come.' One said something vile; I said, 'You know that when you go to confession you must confess that as a sin.' Another, hearing of confession, and thinking that I was speaking against it, said, 'What do you know about confession?' &c.; I said, 'Not much; but I am saying no more than I know,' and repeated what he had said. He was pleased. One said, 'You must be saved by prayer and fasting;' I affirmed it, but showed the infinitely higher place of the blood of Jesus. One pressed me to prove that the Bible was the Word of God, wishing to bring me under church authority; I said I would do so if he denied it, but that as we both admitted this, why should I prove it, and so we got to more practical and personal matters. I was so full of God's joy in all this that I could not but smile, or rather laugh, in speaking to them; they wondered at this, and said, 'He is a good man, we cannot make him angry.' I told them I would come back again at the dinner-hour and speak again; and so we parted. This was a good beginning. At twelve we had a very good prayer-meeting; and all that seems needful is faith, and patience, and prayer. I am just about to return again to the field; but ah! I must go deeper this time, and be prepared for the worst that the enemy can devise or execute. 'They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the *word* of their testimony; and *they loved not their lives unto the death.*' Oh! to be enabled thus to fight and overcome!

"*Evening.*—. . . During the chief part of this evening I have been led to look afresh at the dark side of my prospects, and so have felt as if nothing could be done; but again I am revived by God's own perfect words. I have just come to my room from family worship, where Hebrews vii. 18 to the end was read. I saw something of his glory as a priest, and had some nearness and fulness of heart in prayer, and have again a renewal of hope regarding this poor city. I found to-day also that hope and expectation is springing up in the hearts of some of God's children who at first despaired of anything being done. Last night I told those who disturbed us that I knew well that 'the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison,' but that we would specially pray for them, and that God would fulfil his word, 'He stilleth the tumult of the people.' They seemed struck at this; I added, I will get you all very quiet yet before I leave you. Nothing gives one so great an opening as joy, and love, and peace; and I find these poured into my heart when among these poor outcasts in an uncommon measure. Many of the emigrants who in the morning cursed me hung upon my lips in the evening. One poor woman said, 'Ah! I see the tear of mercy in his eye.' When they made any commotion I said, 'Now, the policeman will stop us;' and they became as quiet as the river beside us."

He returned to Scotland on May 10th, and after three months of evangelistic work, chiefly in Paisley, Port-Glasgow, Renfrew, and other neighbouring places, proceeded to the British dominions of North America, where we shall have in the next chapter to trace his footsteps.

CHAPTER X.

1844–1846.

CANADA.[1]

Our North American colonies had something like a hereditary claim on the services of Mr. Burns. It has been the lot of two of his near relatives to be engaged for a series of years in the service of the church in that important and thriving province of the British crown. His uncle, Dr. George Burns, of the Free Church at Corstorphine, was in 1817 called to be the first minister of the Church of Scotland in the city of St. John, New Brunswick, and, with a short interval, he laboured in that important sphere for the period of fourteen years; while another uncle, Dr. Robert Burns, formerly of Paisley, was for fifteen years secretary to the Glasgow Society for sending out Ministers and Teachers to the Colonies of British North America, and was himself for a quarter of a century employed, first as pastor, and afterwards as theological professor, at Toronto, in Canada West. The latter having arrived at Montreal in the spring of 1844 as one of the first deputies of the young, fresh, and already renowned Free Church of Scotland, the question was at once put to him, "Have you brought your nephew with you?" In fact, the revivals in Scotland were more spoken of in

---

[1] This chapter was kindly prepared by the late Rev. Robert Burns,

D.D., professor of theology in Knox's College, Toronto, than whom none knew the field of labour better, or had done more to advance the work of Christ throughout its length and breadth. It is given with only such revision as the revered author would himself have given to it had he been spared to impart to it his final touch. Besides him, and chiefly through him, I am indebted also to the following friends who have assisted in furnishing the materials on which the narrative is based, viz. Rev. Alexr. Cameron, of the Free Church, Ardersier, formerly of Canada; Mr. Hector Macpherson, lay missionary at St. Martin's, Perthshire, formerly band-major of the 93d Sutherland Highlanders; Rev. Daniel Clark, of Indian Lands, Glengarry, Canada; Mr. Donald Catanach, of Lochiel, and his sister, Mrs. Kelly; Rev. Alexr. N. Somerville, of Anderston Free Church, Glasgow; Sergeant Long, formerly of the 93d, now of the Gymnasium, Glasgow; Mr. James Hosack, merchant, Quebec; the Rev. John Clugston, formerly of that city, now of Stewarton; Mr. William Macintosh, now of Belleville, C.W.; Mrs. M'Nider, formerly of Montreal, now of Vincent Street, Edinburgh; Messrs. James Court, John Dougal, Thos. Allan, James Orr, R. M'Corkle, Montreal, and Farnham.

Canada than in Scotland itself, and the Free Church deputy carried home with him earnest commissions from the good people of Quebec, Montreal, Kingston, Toronto, and almost everywhere, for the presence and labours of Mr. Burns, and others of similar spirit. Written communications to the Colonial Committee at Edinburgh had also preceded him; and when he reached Scotland in June of that year, he found that the proposal to visit Canada had been made to Mr. Burns, and that proposal having been seconded by the full information now given him, all difficulties were removed, and in the course of a few weeks Mr. Burns embarked in the brig *Mary* for Montreal, a free passage to and from Canada having been guaranteed to him by the generous Christian proprietors of the vessel. Mr. Burns sailed from Greenock to Montreal on the 10th August, 1844, and reached Montreal on Thursday, September 26th, of the same year. In this connection the names of Mr. James R. Orr, merchant in Montreal, and of Captain Kelso, the commander and proprietor of the vessel, deserve honourable mention. With the first of these gentlemen Mr. Burns stayed during the greater part of his residence in Montreal; and the names of both are associated with the first propitious dawning of the Free Church era in Canada.

The following extracts from his journal will show the feelings with which he approached this new sphere of labour, and the spirit in which he entered on it:—

"In every circumstance, even to the least, I have seen infinite grace towards me on this occasion. The ship in which I am is an excellent one. As there is no cabin passenger but myself, I have the cabin as quiet as my own study could be, and a state-room in which to meet with God. The means provided for me by the Lord have so exactly met my wants, that I go forth truly 'without purse,' having only two shillings remaining in the world; and yet I am infinitely rich, 'having nothing, and yet possessing all things.'[1] I trust I shall be enabled not only to pray much, but also to study more deeply the divine Word, and prepare more regularly for the profitable discharge of my awful trust. . . . I have got some beginning made among the crew. To-night we had fine weather, and met on deck for worship. It was sweet and solemn, the voice of prayer and praise blending with the winds in the midst of the mighty deep. Oh that I may be prepared for glorifying God fully in my body and spirit, which are his!" On another occasion he says: "To-day we have been becalmed, and I feel the retirement sweet. I think I can say through grace that God's presence or absence alone distinguishes places to me. But ah! I am yet untried. I know but little of what is in me as yet, and still less of the depth of his redeeming love. . . . I have sometimes had glimpses both of the depth of sin and of redeeming love; still, I will need very special teaching if I am to be of use in the western world. . . .

"*September* 2, 1844.—This morning beautifully clear; a gentle north-east breeze, wafting us to our desired haven, brought us in sight of American land, after a delightful run of twenty-three days. . . . Our seasons of divine worship have been increasingly pleasant of late, although I see no mark of a divine work of grace in any one around me. Part of my daily work has been to teach the ship-boys to read. One of them is an interesting black from Africa. Oh that my heart were enlarged in pleading for the ingathering of all nations to Emmanuel!"

On September 10th he reached Quebec, and in his journal we find the following characteristic notice:—

"In God's great mercy we arrived here yesterday, after a delightful passage of thirty-six days. As it was the day of holy rest, I did not go ashore, but had worship on board, and spoke on the twenty-second chapter of Revelation. In the evening I was put on shore, and after looking a little at the aspect of the town, I took up my position alone, and yet not alone, at the market-place, close to the river, and began to repeat the fifty-fifth of Isaiah. A crowd of Canadians and of British sailors soon gathered, who at first seemed mute with astonishment, but soon showed me that the offence of the cross had not ceased by their mocking and threatened violence. However, I got a good opportunity of witness-bearing for God and his Christ; and when I left them had some interesting conversation with some individuals who followed me. When I came down again, at half-past eight, to the place where the ship's boat was to meet me, I got into conversation with a company of young sailors, two of whom remembered well having heard me at Newcastle at the quay and in the corn-market. Some of our poor soldiers and sailors were going about intoxicated. Though it were only to reach these two classes of degraded men, it would be to me a reward for crossing the great ocean. Who knoweth what may be the fruit of this evening's testimony among the wondering crowd! . . . I have had on board the ship a time for solemn observation of the character and ways of the unconverted, which I trust will be profitable. The only book I have had with me beside the book of God is Owen on the *Glory of Christ*, which I find precious indeed. I have had some seasons of great nearness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and have found his word full of power and refreshment."

---

[1] See note, p. 147.

On reaching Montreal he at once found himself in the midst both of new and of old friends. The faces of the old soldiers whom he had known at Aberdeen and at Dundee must have been a sight peculiarly pleasant to him, and a happy omen for the future:—

"When we came into the harbour two Christian gentlemen, Mr. Orr and Mr. M'Kay, came on board, and before leaving my little cabin we had sweet communion at the mercy-seat together. I live with Mr. and Mrs. Orr, a godly couple from Greenock, in a delightful situation at the head of the town. Truly goodness and mercy are heaped on me. . . . Before leaving Scotland I observed that the 93d Regiment, the depot of which I laboured among at Aberdeen in autumn, 1840, had removed from Kingston to Montreal, and I trusted that somehow I might get in among them; but what was my joy and wonder to be told that there were about thirty godly men among sergeants and privates who have a hired room near the barracks in which some of them teach a daily school for poor children gathered from the streets, as well as a Sabbath-school, and in which they meet for social prayer every Friday from six to half-past eight. This is the Sutherland regiment, of which in its early days the Rev. Ronald Bayne, an eminent man of God—afterwards at Inverness, and then at Elgin—was chaplain; and that enjoyed until lately the command of Colonel M'Gregor, a distinguished Christian officer, now at the head of the constabulary force of Dublin. . . . I had hardly arrived when I was told they were looking with desire to my coming, and that they wished me to attend their prayer-meeting, and to preach to them next Sabbath. I accordingly went last night, in company with two pious Scotchmen. . . . When we got to the place I found such a scene as I never before saw: a room crowded with soldiers, wives, and children, who were met not to hear a man speak, but to wait upon Jehovah, as their custom was. It put me in mind of the centurion of old. I enjoyed the meeting exceedingly, speaking upon Moses at the burning bush. One of the soldiers prayed, as well as Mr. M'Intosh and myself. In the soldier's prayer I was struck by the petition that they might cherish such expectations of good through my instrumentality as were warranted by his word, and were according to his mind. They seemed all to feel too that nothing but the presence of God himself would be of any avail. I found it very affecting to them and me to allude to the church of our fathers in the furnace, and to the people of Ross and Sutherland, from among whom the regiment was at first raised. . . .

"*Tuesday, September 24th.—Sabbath* was a good day, sufficient to remind me of September 22d, 1839, the day of the second communion at Kilsyth. At half-past nine A.M. I preached on the quay, on the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, and his purging the temple; congregation large and fixed. At eleven I preached in Mr. Wilks's church (Congregational) from the words, 'When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.' At half-past one P.M. I addressed the 93d Regiment in Mr. Esson's church: very fixed in their attention; more so than I have seen soldiers before. At seven I again preached in Mr. Esson's to a full church, on 'If any man will come after me,' &c., and was much aided.

"*Saturday, December 14th.*—During the present week my work has gone on as before, but in addition my conflicts in soul about it have been deeper than before, and several new doors have been opened. (1.) Two hundred and fifty of the 71st Regiment have come to the cavalry barracks, whom I visited on Tuesday and Friday, and whom I am to see again on Tuesday, if the Lord will. It seems very remarkable that the 93d and 71st Regiments are the only ones whose depots I visited in Scotland, and that the whole of the 93d and so many of the 71st should now be here. I have met with a number of the 71st whom I knew well in Dundee, and this prepares my way among them. (2.) I have got liberty and more than liberty from the commanding officer of the 89th (Irish) Regiment to meet with the men in their schoolroom from week to week. This seemed so unlikely, as he is said to be a Romanist, that I had given up thoughts of applying, but one of the men in the hospital wanted me to ask a favour for him, and this gave me an introduction. (3.) We have got most wonderfully the use of a large room exactly opposite the French church for holding meetings in, both in French and English—all for nothing—the owner being a friend of the gospel—a hearer of Dr. Carruthers the Independent, whose church met for a long time in this very place. This seems a remarkable arrangement, as it is the very best place in the city for reaching the people."

When the Free Church was opened at Côte Street, Montreal, the soldiers of the 93d had a distinct service allotted to them in the afternoon. On the arrival of Mr. Burns this service devolved on him; but besides preaching to the entire regiment on the Sabbath, he preached twice during the week in one of the largest rooms in the barracks; and he went frequently to the regimental hospital to address the sick and speak to the patients personally. Such was the high estimation in which he was held by soldiers both of that and of other regiments and of different denominations, that on several occasions when men of the regiment were sick, Englishmen and Irishmen, Episcopalians and Roman Catholics, have sent to him earnest messages soliciting his visits and his prayers. To quote the words of Mr. Hector Macpherson, then sergeant-major of the band of the regiment: "I shall never forget the first sermon he preached on the first Sabbath after his arrival. He gave out in the usual way the 32d Psalm to be sung, and had read the first four lines, when he began to unfold the feelings and experience of a penitent believer in a way, to me at least, never opened up before nor since, and which was to my afflicted spirit as good news from a far land. It was like oil and wine to my afflicted spirit. It was also greatly blessed to others of my fellow-soldiers. The man of God continued to address us in much freedom of heart and of power for three hours, concluding somewhat abruptly, but with words which indicated a spirit of winning affection to every one: 'I see your time is up, but I hope to have farther opportunities of addressing you,' and solemnly pronounced the apostolic benediction."

The many opportunities of hearing Mr. B., enjoyed by the men of the 93d Regiment, were eagerly improved by them; and the following description of the bearing of his preaching upon them, and which has been drawn by one of themselves, then a non-commissioned officer, is singularly graphic:—"I have known the Rev. W. C. B. to send this famous regiment, these heroes of Balaclava, home to their barracks, after hearing him preach, every man of them less or more affected; not a high word, or breath, or whisper heard among them; each man looking more serious than his comrade; awe-struck, 'like men that dreamed they were;' and when at home, dismissed from parade, they could not dismiss their fears. Out of thirty men, the subdivision of a company under my charge, living in the same room, only *five* were bold enough that Sunday evening to go out to their usual haunts; and these must go afraid, as if by stealth, their consciences so troubled them; the other twenty-five, each with Bible in hand, bemoaning himself. Now, looking at the whole regiment from what took place in this *one* room of it, you may be able to judge of Mr. B.'s powers as an ambassador of Christ with clear credentials!"

While in the city of Montreal, and freely proclaiming the riches of grace in churches, and barrack-rooms, and hospitals, Mr. Burns found the field too narrow; and he went out to the highways, and streets, and squares of the city which was the especial scene of his apostolic labours. For the first two or three nights there was little opposition, but the majority of his hearers being Roman Catholics, the priests were made aware of what was going on and became alarmed, and violent opposition was the issue. He never indeed used the word Popery, nor any term directly marking the system, or calculated to give needless offence; but his finger, it would seem, touched the sore parts of the malady; and the effect was just as of old, when the men that turned the world upside down were assailing the strongholds of heathen superstition and sin. He writes in his journal:—

"*Tuesday*, *September* 24*th.*—Evening at seven in open air in *Place d'Armes*, in the centre of the city, in front of the great Romish cathedral. The proposal of this tried some spirits among us. When I went a considerable number had assembled, and among them a band of the 93d. I had a fine opportunity, and felt the power of the living God with us. Towards the end our enemies made a commotion. The mayor of the city, a Roman Catholic, came to stop me, but was restrained by God. As we retired about half-past nine we were mobbed, chiefly as usual through the excessive fears of friends seeking to guard me from violence. The mayor offered his protection, but I said to the people in his presence, 'No one will harm me—it is my own friends who are creating groundless alarm. I would ask all to go quietly home, and if any one is my enemy he will give me his arm and we will go together.' They quietly moved away. I put my hand on my white neckcloth and moved on unknown to the multitude. If the kingdom of Satan is to be disturbed here, this is but the shadow of what will yet come, and then shall many be offended. . . .

"*Friday, September 27th.*—At half-past five in *Place d'Armes*, awfully mocked and pelted, though with nothing deadly, yet got much truth delivered both while here and after going to an adjoining street, where a gentleman walking with me was struck on the back. While in the *Place d'Armes*, one of the magistrates, evidently, I think, a Romanist, came and ordered me to remove, threatening me with the exercise of his power if I did not. I said I was doing no harm, and would continue, and that he might take me to prison if he pleased; I was ready. He shrunk away and left me to go on. I feel that standing thus in the breach, though it may have no other effect, invigorates my own faith, lifts a testimony honouring to God, and sets me on a high vantage-ground in preaching in the churches. . . .

"*Saturday, September 28th.*—This evening I was again in the field about six o'clock. A great number assembled, and, in contrast with the previous night, they seemed to have ears given them to hear. This continued for some time, but afterwards they began to throw gravel, &c., and to jostle me in the crowd. Little evil might have come of this, had not some who befriended me as a Scotchman sought to save me from danger; and thus my back being turned the crowd rushed on me, and I got away without my hat and one of the tails of my coat containing a handkerchief and Bible. Their enmity was so great that I believe the Bible was torn to pieces as well as the rest, the hat only being recovered. I got into a shop, where many who trembled for me would have had me to remain, but I was quite above all fear, and went out again alone among the people, and got much opportunity of declaring the truth on the way home. Surely these displays of enmity are a token that the Prince of darkness is in some degree afraid!"

These furious onsets are described by eye-witnesses as having been most terrible, and as having more than once threatened serious consequences. Thus, on one occasion, that evidently referred to in one of the above extracts, his coat was torn, his hat was knocked off and trampled on the ground; and his pocket-Bible, his constant companion, torn from his hand. On the other, a stone thrown with violence inflicted a severe wound on his cheek, and it bled freely. A few of the 93d rushed through the crowd, and one in anxiety said, "What's this? what's this?" Smiling, he replied, "Never mind, it's only a few scars in the Master's service." He was carried into the medical chamber of Dr. Macnider, near at hand, when that beloved Christian physician skilfully sewed up the wound. He came forth speedily as if nothing had taken place; and looking round calmly from his re-assumed position, he exclaimed in the words of the great apostle of the Gentiles:—"I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

Another hot day of battle is thus vividly described by the Rev. William Arnot, of the Free High Church, Edinburgh, who happened to be in Montreal at the same time, and who himself bravely joined him on the forlorn hope. "Once," he writes, "I went with him to the Haymarket Square, where he meant to preach in English. I went somewhat anxious for his safety, with intent to help him if need should arise. A circle soon gathered. He began to preach. More assembled outside—thicker and thicker the girdle grew, but the roughest were outside. William and I stood alone in the middle of the ring, hedged very closely in, but the gentlest nearest us. Where they stood at first, they remained. No possibility of movement. Noise and throwing of dirt increased. When he became somewhat wearied I now and then took up the address, and the change of voice operated a little in our favour for getting a hearing. One Irish voice from the outside interrupted William at one time, shouting clear over all the din, 'The devil's dead.' A great laugh followed. When it hushed, William struck in with a plaintive voice, tinged almost with the sarcastic, 'Ah! then, you are a poor fatherless child!' This raised a laugh in his favour, and under cover of it he was enabled to proceed for a while. We were besmeared with mud, thrown from the outer circles, but not hurt.

"The violent opposition of the Irish, however, eventually drove him off. He desisted, as the first missionaries did, when the persecution became violent, and went to another city."

At length the hostile Romanist mayor was replaced in his office by another of different spirit—an excellent Protestant gentleman, of the Wesleyan body, who lent the full weight of his authority and moral support to the cause of order and of peace. Appearing seasonably at one of the meetings where tumultuous disturbances were apprehended, he speedily succeeded in calming the storm, and the assembly soon dispersed without injury to any one. Thereafter he waited on Mr. Burns for consultation on the case. As soon as he had stated the object of his visit, said Mr. Burns, "Let us pray;" when as they knelt together he touched the mayor on the shoulder and said, "You'll pray." He did pray, asking the divine direction, and a blessing on the labours of Mr. Burns, and left him with the single request that he would send him notice when and where he would next preach.

The city of Montreal was only one, though perhaps the most important scene of Mr. Burns' Canadian labours. His mission was to the whole dominion of Canada, which may be considered now as including, or as designed to include, all the dependencies of the British crown in North America. In 1844 the name embraced only two branches of one province, Canada East and Canada West; the former being now termed the province of Quebec, and the latter that of Ontario. Lower Canada was then, as it had been for ages and still is, settled by French Canadians, speaking the French language, and subject to debasing superstition and a dominant priestcraft. The whole land groans under the tyrannical sway of perhaps the most wealthy and powerful hierarchy under the dominion of the see of Rome. We have no doubt that in seeing their splendid palaces, their magnificent cathedrals, colleges, and convents; in seeing the lovely land almost wholly "given to idolatry," the spirit of Mr. Burns was greatly stirred within him. Hence the interest he took, all the time he was in Canada, in the state of the poor "habitants," the benighted French Canadian Roman Catholics; and hence the avidity and the success with which, as we shall presently see, he revived his knowledge of the French language, so as to be able, in a comparatively short space of time, to speak intelligibly and fluently in the French tongue.

Canada West, or Ontario as it is now called, may be termed a Protestant country, inhabited too no doubt by many Roman Catholics especially from Ireland, and by not a few settlers from Germany and the United States; but unquestionably the English and the Scottish elements greatly preponderate. The leading Protestant denominations are, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and Congregationalists. Of these, the first three are each nearly equal in point of numbers, amounting to not much less than one million in all. The population of the whole "Dominion," including Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, is estimated at four millions. Prior to the era of the Disruption in 1843, the state of our countrymen in Canada was anything but promising. The framework of a Presbyterian church was indeed set up, and a number of pious ministers had been from time to time sent out both by the Establishment and the Secession; and the annals of the early Presbyterian church are adorned with a few noble names. Generally speaking, however, the system was cold, formal, and stiff; and spiritual religion in the line of Scottish Presbyterianism was low. The Disruption wrought wonders for Canada. Many pious men in the cities and in the land generally sighed for a change; and the arrival of deputies from the Free Church in regular succession for five years, formed quite a new era in the religious history of the province.

No Protestant missionary can be useful to any great extent in "Lower Canada" who is not able to converse and to preach in the French language; and Mr. Burns very soon felt the necessity of revising his attainments in that direction. So successful was he in this, that he not only addressed the "habitants" regularly in their own language, but, seemingly with the view of acquiring still greater facility in the use of it, he wrote a large proportion of his Canadian journal in the French language.

After a second visit of a few days to Quebec, where it will be remembered he first opened his commission as a herald of the cross on American ground, he was invited to visit Leeds and the Gaelic district of Inverness settlements, about fifty miles from the city. It was on this occasion he revived his knowledge of the Gaelic language, already somewhat familiar to him from his visits to the Highlands of Perthshire; and the raftsmen who were his fellow-voyagers on the St. Lawrence were valuable assistants to him in this work, while he imparted to them the rich treasures of evangelical truth. The settlers at Inverness heard from his lips the glorious gospel in the language most familiar to them, and the blessed results were deep and lasting. When Mr. Clark of Quebec and Dr. Burns of Toronto visited the same place in 1863 they found a fresh revival of religion, specially marked by distinct memorials of the earlier labours of Mr. Burns. The visit of these gentlemen was in the midst of harvest; but the labourers, eager to hear, found two hours at mid-day, besides two hours in the evening, to wait on the preaching of the Word.

The following notices from an intelligent correspondent afford some interesting glimpses of his labours elsewhere:

"At Williamstown, where the church was denied him by the minister and session, the innkeeper readily allowed Mr. Burns to preach under his roof, to a very respectable audience of attentive listeners. At Lochiel he stood in a waggon by the roadside and freely proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation, one of his hearers, against his wishes, holding an umbrella over his head to protect him from the scorching rays of a Canadian sun.

"In the afternoon he preached in a barn, from Psalm xvii. 8, which sermon was blessed for the conversion of one individual, who is now one of the principal elders of the Free Church there.

"In Kenyon he preached in English, but many of the Gaelic people waited to hear him. A pious old woman, who understood no English, was asked why she remained. She replied, 'I thought it would be a privilege to be included in that dear minister's *prayers*. And another thing did me good: he seemed to dwell particularly on one word, spoken in such sweet tones, it sent a glow to my heart—the word 'salvation;' what does that mean?'

"During the communion services at Indian Lands, where his labours on a previous visit had been blessed to many, he preached for several successive days to crowds of eager listeners, who with one accord declared they had never heard such glorious truths. In addressing the communicants, one of his persuasive remarks was, 'If you cannot come in by the saint's door, oh! come in by the sinner's!' A poor idiot who had been present remained after the congregation dispersed, and walked around the small tent (where Mr. Burns still lingered, engaged in prayer), several times, exclaiming, 'You touch my heart, you touch my heart.' Mr. B.'s attention was attracted to him; one of the people told him not to mind the man, he was a fool.

'Ay, ay, one of Christ's fools, perhaps,' which rebuked the man. Learning that there was a small colony of French Canadians several miles distant, he immediately decided upon visiting them, and having first addressed the English people of the place, in a grist-mill, he then preached to the French quite fluently in their own language. They listened as if spell-bound. He afterwards conversed with them individually in fluent French, and they united in saying, 'He was the best priest they ever heard speaking.'"

In moving from place to place on his evangelistic tours in the country districts, Mr. Burns did not often avail himself of the conveyances readily provided by friends, but if at all practicable would invariably travel on foot, so as to avail himself of the opportunities afforded in this way of speaking a word in season and out of season to groups of labourers working in the fields, or any one whom he happened to meet travelling on the highway. It is only those who have been in Canada that can know how trying, and therefore how rare, such foot-travelling must be, owing to the extremes of heat and cold, and the rude state of the roads. When going on long journeys, and obliged to sail on the lakes, it was his constant practice to preach on board the steamers to all who might be disposed to hear him. On these occasions he more particularly addressed himself to the deck passengers, usually composed of emigrants and persons of the labouring and of the poorer classes. The calm and peaceful surface of the expanding lakes, and the even flow of the mighty rivers, greatly favoured such evangelistic efforts. The more intelligent and respectable managers on such conveyances encouraged these efforts by granting a free passage; and there cannot be a doubt that such unrequited and humble methods of doing good have been frequently owned by a blessing from on high. If Mr. Burns was known afterwards in China as "the man of the book," he was equally so known in Canada, as well as in his native land.

The following short sketch taken from his journal may give some idea of the variety and extent of his labours as a missionary in Canada West, while it embraces also places visited by him within the line of East or Lower Canada:

"I have preached at St. Eustache, Lachute, St. Andrews, Hawkesbury, L'Original, and Vankleekhill, and yesterday evening I preached twice in French, but these meetings have not been large.—*Cornwall, Saturday, July 26th*, 1845. In the course of these last weeks I have preached often in English and in French, at Lochiel, Indian Lands, Kenyon, Roxbury, Finch, Martintown, Williamstown, Lancaster, &c. I have had nine little French meetings since the last date. In general they were well disposed to listen to the word. Some of our English meetings have been very large and serious; but, alas! the spiritual deadness of this country is very great. It became at last necessary for me to bear a distinct testimony to the principles of the Free Church. The report of the proceedings of the Assembly of that church is interesting. Their prosperity in an external point of view is very remarkable. May their spiritual prosperity be in proportion. There was formerly at Martintown, near this, a true minister of Jesus Christ named Connel, who appears to have been the means of saving many souls. He died ten years ago, but his memory is blessed, as is that of all the just. After having preached at Cornwall, and further down on the shores of the St. Lawrence, I crossed the Salmon river to Dundee, quite near New York state, and from that place I preached as I went along towards Montreal, where I arrived last Thursday; having visited on my way Fort Covington, in New York state, La Rivière De Loup, Lake Strove, Huntingdon, St. Michael's, Durham, North Georgetown. Sometimes I have been a little encouraged, but in general spiritual religion, which alone saves the human soul, appears to be very rare. Nevertheless I have met with some people who seem to love the Lord. Yesterday I tried again to preach out of doors, but with little success. They stoned and pelted me with mud, but by the grace of God I escaped danger. One poor man in the crowd recognized me as the person whom he had seen beaten at Dublin near the custom-house. Although a Romanist, he appeared yesterday much disposed to listen to the word, and his testimony in my favour will be undoubtedly useful among his countrymen."

After a fortnight's labour at Bytown, now the city of Ottawa, where Mr. Wardrope, the excellent minister there, had been recently settled, he visited Bristol, Perth, Lanark, Dalhousie, Beckwith, Smith's Falls, Carleton Place, St. Andrews, Brockville, Prescott, and Kingston. At this last place he remained some weeks, and besides supplying the Free Church there, he preached seven times to the soldiers of the 71st Regiment whom he had formerly seen. The principal officer gave him liberty to do so, and this he devoutly notices as a proof of encouragement from God. He preached also in the country all around, particularly Gananoque, Glenburnie, and two other places; meeting everywhere with encouragement more or less. He visited also Cobourg, Belleville, and other places adjacent, such as Demorestville, Picton, and Napanee. When at Kingston he received through Dr. Begg, who had come out as a deputy from the Free Church, a letter inviting him to visit France. The impression on his mind by this circumstance is thus noted in his journal:—

"Perhaps the Lord intends to call me thither, to bear testimony to his truth. May his will be done! Nevertheless, I must go to the upper part of this province; to London, for example, and its vicinity." He then adverts to his visits to, and missionary labours at, Fredericksburg, Peterborough, Ottonabee, Port Hope, Clarke, Newcastle, Toronto, Niagara, Streetsville, and Esquesing; "preaching," as he says, "everywhere the Word of God which liveth and endureth for ever." "At Toronto," he says, "I had much pleasure in meeting with the young men who are at college preparing for the work of the ministry. There are some among them who seem to be true Christians; and they are all making satisfactory progress in their studies."

In the summer of 1846 he visited a considerable portion of the western territory, preaching at Oakville, Wellington Square, Hamilton, London, St. Thomas, Williams, Lobo, Southwold, Dunwich, Aldbro, Mora, Eckford, Chatham, Amherstburgh near the boundary line, Detroit in the United States, and Port Sarnia, meeting everywhere with encouragement. At Amherstburgh, he preached to a congregation of blacks, formerly slaves, who interested him much. At Sarnia he preached by means of an interpreter to an interesting assembly of American Indians, who are under the instructions of the Methodist missionaries; and, as might have been expected, the meeting and exercises were very solemn and edifying. Two months' labours were bestowed on Imperial, Woodstock, Beechville, Bradford, Lower Stratford, &c. In 1846 most of the places visited by Mr. Burns in Canada West were as yet unsupplied either with Free Churches or ministers; and his labours and varied ministrations were singularly blessed of God, as means of uniting and quickening the members. Among the ministers whom he found settled in those parts, we notice the names of Messrs. Wardrope, Graham, and Macalester, all of whom often spoke of the great refreshing and spiritual edification enjoyed by them and their people from his visits. Of the labours also of the Free Church deputies, particularly Dr. Bonar, Mr. Arnot, Mr. Somerville, and Mr. Munro, he speaks with great interest. These were the ministers who had the charge of the "Free Church" congregation at Côte Street, Montreal, during his residence in Canada, and each of them appreciated the value of his labours, and readily took part with him in them.

Among the varied testimonies we have received to the good effects of the visit of Mr. Burns to Canada, one of the most valuable is that of the Rev. Alexander Cameron of Ardersier, whose opportunities of information were peculiarly favourable.

"It was my lot," says he, "shortly after the return of Mr. Burns from Canada, to labour among the Highlanders of Glengarry for some years until health failed. I found the people in a very interesting state of mind—many of them cherishing a tenderness of conscience and a brokenness of spirit, and thirsting eagerly for the Word of life. Some of all ages were in this condition, but especially young men and young women. The crowds that congregated on the Sabbaths at Lochiel, the most central station at which I preached, were sometimes very great. In the district of Glengarry, where there are now seven or eight ministers, there was then only one, Mr. Daniel Clark of Indian Lands, and myself; consequently the people came from all quarters, travelling five, ten, or even twenty miles and upwards. Many of them started on the Saturday so as to be forward in time for the morning service. The poor Roman Catholics observing all this, thought the heads of their Protestant neighbours were turned. In one sense it was easy to preach to these thirsty souls, for the word of God was precious in those days. It was the same wherever I went; no matter where sermon was intimated to be preached in any school-room or district, the place would be crowded, even although such meetings were continued in different places nearly the whole week, as sometimes happened in winter; and often a few of the more ardent spirits would attend all these meetings, travelling from place to place for this purpose. The face of things began gradually but steadily to change. Old customs and inveterate habits were one by one abandoned. Balls and merry-makings and New Year's festivals, so frequent in that country, were fast disappearing. Some of the leaders in such things with their own hands cast their fiddles and bagpipes into the fire; and instead of the sounds of revelry, the voice of praise and spiritual melody began to be heard in their dwellings. Zion was meanwhile putting on her beautiful garments. Communion seasons were now more like those in old Ferintosh than the former scanty gatherings in the 'backwoods.' This state of things I ascribe chiefly under God to the labours of Mr. Burns. Doubtless many other able and excellent men, especially some from the Free Church at home, laboured faithfully, and I believe successfully, in Glengarry; but the visit of Mr. Burns, in my estimation, was the crowning visit, and the impression produced by his preaching and his godly demeanour was deep, pervasive, and abiding. The great day alone shall fully declare it."

The following sketch under the hand of an intelligent office-bearer of our Church in Glengarry, at whose house Mr. Burns sojourned, and by whom he was conducted on his missionary way, may illustrate the obstacles which stand in the way of itinerating labour in Canada, and the manner in which they were met and conquered by Mr. Burns:—

"A furious snow-storm having come on, he was detained for a week; and the state of the roads prevented any public meetings being held; but he improved the time by conversing on matters pertaining to the kingdom with our household, including farm-servants, among whom were several French Canadians. We found him remarkably agreeable and sociable as a guest, entertaining us with incidents relative to his labours in Ireland, and those parts of Scotland where revivals have taken place. The recital of incidents connected with such themes always caused his countenance to beam with a heavenly joy. Much of his time also was spent in retirement and over his Bible, which he often carried to the table at meal times, referring to it whenever a pause in the conversation gave him an opportunity. Having an appointment to preach in the Congregational chapel, Indian Lands, so soon as the snow-storm subsided, he and I made a desperate effort to fulfil the engagement. Taking a powerful team of horses and a strong sleigh, we found the roads in an almost impassable state; the horses floundering in the snow, which in some places almost hid them from our view; and in other places they were incapable of moving forward one step, till I got out and made a track before them. In remarking on the state of the roads I happened to say, 'This is awful!' but was instantly checked by my dear fellow-traveller saying, 'Oh! my dear sir, there is nothing awful but the wrath of God.' Although travelling at the rate of only one mile an hour, we arrived at our destination in due time, where we found a goodly number assembled; and he delivered an impressive sermon, taking for illustration things that he had noticed along our route, such as the clearances in the forest, with the other usual symptoms of progress in the settlements."

References having been more than once made to the services of the deputies from the Free Church to Canada, it may not be unsuitable to insert the following notices from one of the friends who have contributed materials for this chapter:—

"When I arrived in Montreal, in 1842, the spiritual condition of the three congregations was deplorably low, and, with very few exceptions, it was so throughout the country. But I make special reference to Montreal, where there were a very few—like the gleanings of the vintage—who were longing and waiting for the salvation of Zion. These few were led to unite in prayer to the exalted Head of the Church to hasten his coming by whom he would; and *he* was graciously pleased to hear their cry, and send his servants. The first was Dr. Burns of Paisley, whose first sermon was from Revelation i. 17, 18. To some this sermon was the fulfilment of the promise, 'When the poor and the needy seek water,' &c. I think Dr. Burns was followed by Mr. John Bonar (afterwards Dr. Bonar), full of love, and meekness, and wisdom, and undaunted courage. He was preeminently honoured of God in gathering and uniting the scattered sheep, and in organizing the Côte Street congregation, and, indeed, of advancing the interests of the church throughout the whole province. In his arrival was beautifully seen the majestic goings forth of Him who is wonderful in counsel. Mr. Bonar was succeeded by other eminent servants of God, whose special mission was to supply the Côte Street congregation, which was *then* the great centre of the Free Church in Canada."

Among these may be specially noted Mr. Arnot, then of Glasgow, now of the Free High Church, Edinburgh; Mr. Somerville of Anderston, Glasgow; Mr. Munro of Rutherglen; Mr. Macnaughton of Paisley, now of Belfast; Mr. Buchanan of Bothwell; Mr. Bremner of Glasgow; Professor

King, now of Halifax, Nova Scotia; Mr. Lewis of Leith, afterwards of Rome; Mr. J. C. Burns of Kirkliston; Mr. Couper of Burntisland; Dr. Begg of Edinburgh; Mr. Paterson of Tranent; the late Mr. Cobban of Braemar;—who during periods more or less extended, laboured in the cities, and occasionally in the rural districts, to the edifying of multitudes of hearers, and to the effect of laying firm and deep the foundations of what in its character as a "united church" may now with perfect propriety be called the "Free Presbyterian Church of Canada."

Mr. Burns returned to Scotland, after about two years of incessant labour in Canada, in the same vessel in which he had before sailed for the West, arriving in Glasgow on the 15th September, 1846. He was still in vigorous health, yet showing but too evident traces of the exhausting and peculiarly trying scenes which he had passed through. The clear tones of a voice of more than ordinary compass and power were gone; his mind and spirit were worn and jaded; and he had already begun to acquire a certain *aged* look which he never afterwards wholly lost. He had indeed emphatically "endured hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and he bore the marks of it more or less to his grave.

CHAPTER XI.

1846—1847.

CALL TO THE CHINESE FIELD.

My readers will remember a statement from my brother's own hand of the circumstances of his first consecration to the missionary work, and of the remarkable train of events by which the fulfilment of his purpose was temporarily, though, as it seemed, indefinitely delayed. That purpose still remained unchanged. He was still as much as ever, and all through those laborious and eventful intervening years, a missionary at heart, and only waited the intimation of the Master's will as to the time and the place of his appointed work. He had heard the general summons of the divine Commander, "Who will go for me?" and he had resolutely answered, "Here am I, send me." That answer had been recorded in heaven, and lived evermore within his heart. Amid all his home labours he spoke and acted under the solemn sense of it—spoke and acted as a missionary just about to go forth to a distant land, and only addressing a few parting words to his brethren at home ere the final summons to depart should reach him. How that summons came at last, and in what spirit it was obeyed, will be best told in his own words, in the continuation of the same statement just referred to, dated at sea:—

"*Thursday, July 29th*, 1847, lat. 25° 30′ south; lon. 28° 40′ west.—. . . From this time (July 23d, 1839) until the Disruption I appeared to have a special work to do in my own country, and having no call to the missionary field I thought no further of it than this, that I did not feel it would be lawful for me to *settle* at home, but only to comply with present calls of duty to preach the Word. In the year 1843, and still more in 1844, I found my heart very much drawn off from the home field—the days of God's great power with me seeming to be in a great measure past, and ecclesiastical questions having taken so deep a hold on the public mind, that it was not in a state as before to be dealt with simply about the question of conversion. In these circumstances I went at the call of some friends to Dublin in 1844 to try the field there, but finding no great opening I returned to Scotland, and the way being made very clearly open for my going on a visit to Canada, I sailed for Montreal, August 10. In Canada I found sufficient evidence that it was indeed the call of God which I obeyed in going to it; but after labouring there for nearly two years, and having gone over the ground which seemed providentially laid out for me, I felt that unless I were to remain there for life, the time was come for my departure. I was confirmed in this view by having had my mind afresh directed towards India by a letter from an acquaintance there, and also by a call from our Continental Committee to make use of my newly acquired knowledge of French by visiting the continent of Europe. I accordingly sailed from Quebec for Scotland on August 20th, 1846, having a deep impression that I should find no special work to do in Scotland that would detain me there longer than a few months, but feeling quite uncertain what would be my ultimate destination. On my arrival I was asked anew to go to the Continent, but against this there were objections. I did not see any prospect of doing much there during a brief visit, and I could not but reflect that at my period of life it must be now decided whether I was to preach from place to place to the end, or go to a heathen field, as originally destined. At any rate I felt that I could decide on nothing until I had paid a few visits to those home fields with which I had formerly been connected. This work occupied me during the autumn and the early part of the winter. I might have protracted the period indefinitely, being encompassed with invitations on every hand; but as I did not see or feel any special blessing in this work, I preached no more than I could not avoid doing, and then came the question, What is my duty with reference to the future? About the end of the year, at the time of the Parsee's ordination in Edinburgh, I arrived at the clear decision that I was not at liberty to labour any longer as hitherto without ascertaining whether our missionary committee would still desire me to fulfil my original intention. I accordingly called on Dr. Candlish, and having laid before him my views, and joined with him in imploring divine guidance, he stated that he thought it was clearly my duty to go as originally destined to the heathen, provided that I found no special cause as heretofore to detain me, and said that he would confer with others on the subject. He did so, but found that though no one would object to my going if I wished to do so, yet as the Indian stations were all occupied, there was no special opening for me.

At this very time, and while they were actually conversing on the matter, a letter came to the convener of the Foreign Mission Committee, Dr. James Buchanan, from James Hamilton of Regent Square, London (convener of the English Presbyterian Church Missionary Committee), making earnest inquiry whether Dr. B. could point out any minister or preacher in Scotland who might be suitable to go as their first missionary to China, seeing they had contemplated this mission for more than two years, but had as yet been disappointed in finding suitable agents. This seemed to Dr. B. a providential coincidence, and without communicating with me, he wrote mentioning a few names and mine among the rest. Some weeks elapsed without my hearing anything further on the subject; but meanwhile my own experience more and more pointed my thoughts and desires to the foreign field, and at last in the beginning of February a letter came to me from Mr. Hamilton, in which, after reminding me of my original design and prospects regarding an eastern mission, he mentioned the position of their own missionary scheme, and asked what my views in regard to embarking in such an undertaking now were. As he wished a speedy answer I could only reply that the matter was too varied in its bearings and of too momentous a character to be at once decided on; but that it would be the subject of prayer and consideration, as well as of conference with the servants of God around me. On receipt of my letter, their missionary committee instructed Mr. Hamilton to send me an express and earnest call to become their church's first missionary to China. I received this, but still found myself unable to arrive at a final decision. Regarding the importance of the work there could be no doubt; but when I considered on the one hand the manner in which God had hitherto called me to labour, and the many calls at home and abroad which I still had to preach the Word as heretofore; and on the other considered the uncertainty of my being suited to the peculiarities of the Chinese field, I felt embarrassed, and though I wrote a letter of acceptance, I could not send it off, but rather suspended the case by letting them know my difficulties, and my need of delay, with a view of getting further light. I also urged them in the interval to look out for others, and mentioned two ministers to whom they might apply. Another ten days elapsed, during which I was in Edinburgh, as I had been for some time previously, preaching in St. Luke's, &c., and now also assisting Dr. Duncan in his junior Hebrew class, his health being imperfect. The call to China was gradually assuming more and more importance in my view, and though some of God's servants seemed to doubt whether it was a field suitable to my habits, &c., yet the prevailing opinion seemed to be that I ought to go. Feeling that I must resume communication with the English committee, I went out before doing so to Kilsyth, at the communion season on the first Sabbath of March, that I might sit, it might be, for the last time at the table of the Lord Jesus on earth with my beloved parents, and that I might have the aid of their counsel, and that of my cousins David and Charles J. Brown (of Glasgow and Edinburgh), who were expected to be my father's assistants. On the Monday after the communion I wrote to London again to let it be known that I was still weighing the matter brought before me, and that with a view to arrive at a final and satisfactory decision, I would be glad to be furnished with information in regard to the nature of the work in which they would wish or expect me to be engaged, and also to learn what length of time it would require to attain an adequate knowledge of the language with a view to preach the gospel in it. I also stated generally on the subject, 1st. That I did not make such inquiries as if difficulties would be sufficient to keep me back, were the path of duty in other respects plain; but simply in order that I might have full materials for comparing this call with others that were given me, as from France, &c. 2d. That as devoted to the missionary work I felt that unless it appeared that God detained me at home by some special call, I must go to *some* field where Christ had not been named, &c. In reply to this letter Mr. Hamilton wrote that he believed the difficulties of the Chinese language had been overestimated, but that they expected about the end of March from China Mr. Hugh Matheson, one of their committee, who would bring them full and recent information, and that this would be communicated to me. At this time I spent four weeks preaching in Bute and Arran, and on the 10th of April I went to Edinburgh to preach in Mr. Moody Stuart's. The impression of my duty now became so strong that I felt I could no longer hesitate about signifying my willingness to go, and on Monday I wrote to that effect. I saw that I would dishonour my profession of the gospel, and thus wound the honour of Jesus, if I seemed to linger any longer; and though I had not heard again from London, I felt that on general grounds, and taking even the most discouraging view of the case, it was my duty to go forward. The committee met on this very day, and so discouraging was the view given by Mr. M.[1] of the field and of the missions there, as compared with our missions in India, that the committee resolved to recommend to the Synod about to meet at Sunderland the following Tuesday to give up thoughts of a mission to China, and begin in place a mission in Hindustan. When I heard of this decision, which the receipt of my letter did not seem to have altered, I was at a loss how to act, but saw that now matters were coming to a crisis, and that the issue would be either to shut up my path toward China or set me free from their call altogether. I did not feel any sympathy with their proposal to draw back, and fearing lest they might do so, and thus dishonour the command and promise of the exalted Jesus, I was the more pressed in spirit to go forward, that such a consequence might be avoided. I accordingly resolved to go up to Sunderland on the 20th, and meet the Synod on the matter. I did so, and on Wednesday the 21st I found that the Synod were bent on prosecuting the mission, and so on Thursday I was ordained to the work. . . . In this manner from step to step my path has been hedged up in this important matter; and now I find myself in the midst of the great ocean studying Chinese, and having the prospect, if the Lord will, of spending the rest of my days in that vast empire of heathen darkness.

One or two sentences from the ordinary entries in his journal will throw additional light on the circumstances of the call which now came to him, and of the posture of his soul towards it:—

---

[1] From the day that Mr. Burns set sail for China the mission has had no warmer or more generous friend than Mr. Hugh M. Matheson. He has filled the chair of the committee since Dr. Hamilton's death in 1867.

"The call to this work came to me some months before I had full light to comply with it; but the way at last was made in all respects very plain. . . . On Tuesday, April 9th, I met in Glasgow James Denniston, returned from Jamaica, and on his way, if God will, to Constantinople as a missionary to the Jews. Thus, after so long an interval, we met again in the place where nine years before, at the University, he had given himself to the Lord to go to the circumcision, and I to go to the Gentiles. Having been so long engaged in other work, we had now the near prospect of entering on the fields in regard to which the vows of God were upon us. It was a confirming interview. To sovereign grace be the praise—the endless unutterable praise! . . . I came up to Sunderland to confer upon the matter," and "found to my joy that the mind of the Synod was to go *forward;* and I being now ready, and my way hedged in, I was next day ordained according to Acts xiii., and the day following I was in London. The Presbytery of Newcastle ordained me—the only one within whose bounds I had previously laboured; Dr. Paterson presided (in his own church we were met), being the only minister remaining in his place of those with whom I had laboured in 1841, &c.; William Chalmers[1] preached at the ordination, being not only my cousin, but a minister born at Malacca, the centre of the early Chinese mission under Dr. Milne, &c. These were interesting coincidences; and still more so was the fact that Dr. Morrison, the first evangelical Chinese missionary, whose Chinese Bible I am now studying, was the son of an elder in the English Presbyterian Church, and was brought up as a Christian in the High Bridge Church, Newcastle-on-Tyne, where, in 1841, I laboured for three months, little thinking of such a position as that which I now occupy."

My readers will willingly linger a little longer in the retrospect of this memorable ordination solemnity, which formed so important an era in the history of missions to the far East; and with this view will read with interest the following lines written at the time by an eye-witness, himself a devoted friend of the Chinese cause, and a deep sharer in all the hopes and fears and prayerful aspirations of that solemn time:—

---

[1] Now the Rev. Professor Chalmers, D.D., of the English Presbyterian College, London.

"By far the most solemn and striking matter at the meeting of Synod has been the setting apart of William C. Burns as a missionary to China. Who could have believed that such would have taken place only two days before? Such an ordination has scarcely ever—if ever—taken place. It is perfectly marvellous. The thing was done suddenly (2 Chronicles xxix. 36), yet I cannot think hastily, for God hath evidently been preparing his servant for it these months past. The more I reflect upon all the circumstances since the time of our first speaking to him on the 21st December, when we told him of the strait in which the Church was for want of missionaries to China, up to the decision of the Synod on the 21st April to ordain him the very next day, the more I am amazed at the wondrous things which have come to pass, and cannot doubt that God has been in them of a truth.

"On the 21st December, 1846, Mr. Burns was much at a loss as to the future; but seeing no open door, and no special call to labour at home, he placed himself in the hands of the Foreign Mission Committee to go to India, his original destination. The committee were obliged, from the state of their funds, to refuse his services. Shortly afterwards Mr. James Hamilton wrote to him, asking if he would go in the service of the English Presbyterian Church in the mission proposed to China. This was made the subject of much thought and prayer, and it was long before he could at all discover the path which the Lord was indicating in the matter. Dr. Duncan strongly urged him to go; others as decidedly dissuaded him, and endeavoured to show to him that Scotland had still claims upon him. He himself inclined to go for a time to the Continent, and it was long before he could see that he had any call from the English Presbyterian Church, or that China was the field to which he should devote himself. On the 10th April he was still in darkness; on the

11th he preached in Edinburgh (St. Luke's), from Jeremiah xv. 16, and John xii. 36, 'Walk while ye have the light.' Light dawned upon him that day; his heart was enlarged towards the heathen; his prayers were full of pleadings on their behalf. Next morning he came to breakfast, and to our utter amazement told us he no longer saw his way to refuse the call, and intended to write to London to that effect that day. A note received the following morning mentioned that he had done so. His desire was to have a conference at the meeting of Synod the following week at Sunderland, when future plans might be decided upon.

"The very day he wrote his note, placing himself at the disposal of the Church for China, the Foreign Mission Committee had a meeting, when it was decided to abandon China—to undertake Central India instead. The information which the Committee had received regarding the number of missionaries already in the field, the difficulty of acquiring the language, and the country being still so generally closed, led to that conclusion. Mr. Burns was informed of that decision. An elaborate report was drawn up in his best style by Mr. Hamilton to lay before the Synod.

"Tuesday morning the 20th April, at nine o'clock, the committee met in Sunderland. After much consultation the brethren came to one mind, that we must not abandon China—the Church was committed to it—and Mr. Hamilton was instructed to draw up an entirely different report. No communication had been received from Mr. Burns; but the Church resolved that its duty was to keep by China, and to prosecute the missionary work there, as had been resolved upon two years before. Mr. Burns arrived in Sunderland the next day. His mind was unchanged. China was still his field, whether the Presbyterian Church abandoned it or no; and he was not a little amazed when he heard of the proceedings in committee the preceding day.

"The new report was read in Synod; Mr. Hamilton spoke and others followed. Mr. Welsh was asked to pray for guidance in the matter, and Mr. Burns was then invited to address the brethren. He did so; giving an account of his early life—his dedication to the missionary work—his arrest in Scotland, when the Lord gave testimony to the word of his grace, and the reasons for the resolution now formed. The people were much affected, as was the speaker; he was obliged frequently to pause, and at last to stop altogether. A meeting for conference was shortly afterwards summoned, at which he fully opened up his wishes in the matter, especially as regarded ordination. He wished to go forth only as an evangelist, not to administer sacraments; 'Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.' Acts xiii. was read; Mr. P. L. Miller prayed; and after much discussion it was resolved that he should be ordained the next day at ten o'clock, and proceed to China forthwith.

"The ordination services took place in a church in which he had often preached, and by a Presbytery (the only one in England) within whose bounds he had laboured for several months with no small success—a Presbytery from which Morrison also went forth, for his father was an elder of High Bridge Church, Newcastle; and not the least remarkable coincidence was the fact that the minister who preached had been born and baptized in China. The service was commenced by the Moderator, Mr. Anderson, giving out Psalm lxxii. 8–11. He read Acts xiii., and sung Paraphrase xxiii. 11–15:—

'Lo! former scenes, predicted once,
Conspicuous rise to view;
And future scenes, predicted now,
Shall be accomplish'd too,' &c.

The prayers were remarkable for enlargement and fervency—bearing upon every point connected with the solemn work of the day. Mr. Chalmers took as his text John xix. 30, 'It is finished;' and viewed the words, 1st. In reference to God; 2d. to man—closing with an application to the occasion—what was left for Christ's disciples to do. The ordination service was conducted by Dr. Paterson with extreme simplicity and apostolic fervour. After the questions had been satisfactorily answered, Mr. Burns knelt down—Dr. Paterson prayed, and laid hands on him—as did the other ministers, and so the first missionary of the English Presbyterian Church was 'set apart by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.' The charge followed, which was suited to the occasion, and suited to the man to whom it was addressed. Psalm xcviii. 1–4 was then sung:—

'O sing a new song to the Lord,
For wonders he hath done,' &c.

"After the service, Mr. Miller, formerly of Dundee, and Mr. Irving of Falkirk, accompanied him to Dr. Paterson's house, and were afterwards joined by Mr. Nisbet, &c., where prayer was made, and at four o'clock Mr. B. left for Newcastle, and preached that evening in Groat Market Chapel. I joined him there at ten o'clock. A considerable number were waiting to bid him farewell. We went to the lodging, sung Psalm c., 'ALL people,' &c., read Mark xvi., upon verse 3 of which he remarked how the women still went on, not knowing how the stone would be rolled away, and applied it to our duty in similar circumstances. We spoke of how marvellously the difficulties had been removed already in this matter. He was filled with astonishment at the way in which it had been gone about—so little of man in the whole matter—so little preparation in the sight of the world—and the Church so harmonious. We prayed together and then parted. The next morning at five o'clock, I heard his heavy foot pass my door in time for the train to London, on his way to China as the first missionary of the Presbyterian Church in England."

In finally accepting the call of the Synod to the Chinese field, my brother had declared himself willing, without returning even for a parting visit to Scotland, to proceed at once to his distant sphere of labour. It is said that when publicly asked in presence of the court how soon he could be ready to enter on his work, he replied, with prompt decision, "To-morrow." This resolute tone and attitude of spirit was eminently characteristic of him. As a man that warreth, he entangled not himself with the affairs of this life, and moved about ever as a free and unencumbered soldier, ready at a moment's warning to march at the

Master's command to any quarter of the world. Amongst the memories of his old classic studies the *miles expeditus*[1] was ever, as I remember, a favourite name and idea with him, and to that model did he ever strive to discipline and brace his spirit. Long as he had doubted, and patiently as he had sought and waited for light as to the will of God in this matter, now that that will to him was clear he was utterly without hesitation and without fear. Even the difficulties which stood in the way, and which at that very time had been so greatly magnified as almost to have postponed for the time the attempt to enter a field so unpromising, instead of daunting, only fired his spirit, and made him more impatient to press on, like a brave soldier rushing to the breach in a forlorn hope. "This," writes he in his journal, "only strengthened my resolution to go forward, *fearing lest the name of that Lord to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth might be dishonoured;* and I came to Sunderland to confer about the matter, when I found to my joy that the mind of the Synod was to go *forward.*" Now then that the matter was decided, his voice was for immediate action. The day before he had, I believe, left his father's house with the fixed resolution that so it should be. He did not *say* farewell to those that were at home in the house, but he none the less and solemnly *took* farewell. "I was," says an elder sister, "the only person at home when he left, our parents being both, I think, in the north. I remember Dr. Hamilton's letter earnestly asking him to be the pioneer missionary for whom the English Presbyterian Church had been so long seeking. This letter was followed by one from Mrs. Barbour, in which she reminded him that in an address to the Students' Missionary Association in Edinburgh he had said to this effect—that when young men gave themselves to the Lord for the work of the ministry, they were not to prescribe to him where their field of labour should be, but should be willing to go anywhere, '*even to China.*' I remember he smiled on reading this, and said he did not remember having said *even to China*, but went immediately and looked at the address, and said, 'Yes it is—even to China.' Before receiving this call he was studying the Gaelic, and seldom had the Gaelic psalm-book out of his hand, but soon after this we saw that the Gaelic was laid aside and the Encyclopedia was brought out, and he was busy studying the Chinese characters. I don't think he gave a decided answer to James Hamilton before the meeting of the Synod at Newcastle; but having heard that some timid persons were daunted by some difficulties that stood in the way, he said, 'That's the very thing that makes my call clear to go,' and at once packed his little carpet-bag to start for Newcastle. The day he went off he was long in papa's study in prayer, and then coming out he silently wrung my hand and looked solemnly round as if taking a farewell look of the house; he had his Breadalbane plaid over his arm, and after reaching the front-door he turned and hung it up in the lobby, taking one belonging to his *mother* instead, and giving me an expressive look as he did so. I was very much overcome, and watched his receding figure with the feeling that he would not return. I went into the study to give vent to my feelings, and found the Bible left open at Isaiah lxiv., 'Oh, that thou would rend the heavens,' &c. On going up to the drawing-room I found the Gaelic Testament and psalm-book neatly put into one of the shelves, as if he had done with them, and I then said, 'William will return no more.' In a very few days, as you know, it was all decided, and the first announcement we received was from Mr. Irving of Falkirk, who kindly came straight from the Synod meeting to give us the tidings." So he writes in his journal, the thread of which I now gladly resume:—

---

[1] *i.e.* Without baggage or heavy armour, and so always ready for march or battle.

"I had fully, though not formally, taken leave of all friends in Scotland before coming up to the Synod, and therefore thought it duty to act upon the text, 'Let me first go and bid them farewell,' &c., and without returning back to hasten on my way. This view approved itself to others, and I hoped to have gone off at once through France, and to have been in China in July by the steam communication lately established. This was overruled, however, on the ground that I would reach the field at a trying season, and by a trying route; and so it was resolved that I should wait for this present vessel, and in the interval visit the churches in this Synod. I have been accordingly in most of them—Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Brighton, London, &c. &c., and see much cause to adore the wisdom and grace of God in this delay. I do not hope again to see my dear parents before setting out; but my brother Islay and his wife from Dundee have come up to see me away, and were with me to-day along with two others occupied in my outfit (Mr. and Mrs. Ballantyne), when we took possession of my little cabin and of the ship for the Lord in the exercise of his worship. . . . My beloved parents still spared to us seem to rejoice in giving me up to the Lord for this 'honourable' work. Yes, 'it is an honourable work,' as Dr. M'Donald of Ferintosh said to me in his own veteran spirit, when the Lord permitted me to meet with him once more in Glasgow at the late communion there. . . . Before leaving Scotland I preached in Bute, Arran, &c., and had *many* calls to other places; but as no very special blessing seemed to attend the word, I did not feel myself at liberty to refuse a call to labour among the heathen, and that call came to me as one originally self-devoted to that work should the Lord call me. It is thus in one view a dark and solemn dispensation in my case to leave this land. I go away because, either through my sin or the people's, God's Spirit worketh not among us as in years past. But it may be that this is God's own way of shutting me out from the home field, and sending me far hence to other Gentiles. 'They essayed to preach the gospel, &c., but the Spirit suffered them not,' and then the vision of the man of Macedonia appeared, and they 'went over to help them.' Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord? A man's goings are of the Lord: how then *can* a man understand his own way? THOU wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Hosanna! Amen."

In such a strain of exalted faith and hope, and with such solemn musings alike of the past and of the future, he closed the eventful period of his home and colonial ministry, and turned his face toward those new scenes to which his divine Master was pointing the way.

CHAPTER XII.

1847.

DEPARTURE FOR CHINA.

The missionary's departure from England, though delayed in the manner above described, took place at last somewhat suddenly. The ship in which he was to sail, the *Mary Bannatyne*, was dropping slowly down the Channel under a light breeze towards Portsmouth, and it was expected that several days would elapse before we should have to join her there. He had accordingly made several preaching engagements for the intervening days, and was, on the evening of Tuesday, the 8th June, in the very act of entering the Scotch Church at Woolwich in fulfilment of one of these, when an express from London reached him, conveying the information that a favourable wind had sprung up and carried the ship by a rapid run to Portsmouth, and that not an hour was to be lost if he wished to join her before she sailed. He accordingly hastened at once to the railway station in hopes to catch the last train, but was, happily as it turned out, too late. Next morning he and I set out together, not without some fears of after all missing the passage, but arrived to our joy in good time. On reaching the harbour we saw the ship riding at anchor in the roads, and procuring a boat reached it in half an hour. Finding that the vessel would not after all sail till the evening, I resolved to remain on board, and return by the latest boat. We retired to the little cabin and spent the time in reading the sacred Word, and in pouring out our hearts in prayer, for the last time it might be in this world together. He read the 17th chapter of St. John, and the last of 2 Timothy from the 10th verse to the end, accompanying the slow and interrupted reading with many gracious and quickening words out of the fulness of the heart. The latter passage especially he bade me mark and remember, and convey it to his friends and brethren at home as a parting message of love. Coming to the last words he paused for a moment and said: "The last words are, 'Salute Prisca,' &c.; this *you* must do for me; for I could not write," and burst into a flood of tears. We wept together. In the course of the afternoon he had shut himself up for an hour or two for the purpose of writing, and I saw afterwards on the table a sheet of paper half-written addressed to his mother; but the effort had been too much for him, and he had given it over. After again joining in prayer we embraced and parted, he again and again exclaiming as he lay upon my neck, "O! is it not blessed; is it not wondrous grace to be separated in this way, separated for such a cause and for such a work?" His last words were, "Remember our father and mother." As we pushed off from the vessel's side, he called after me and pointed to his Bible, which he held up in his hand, as if to say that there was the only thing worth living for in all the world, and the one everlasting bond of union for those who are parted here. A fresh breeze sprung up; the light cutter flew before the wind, and in a few moments we had left the vessel far behind us; but long as I watched its lessening form in the deepening darkness, I seemed to see him standing in the same attitude still. I felt that I had parted not from a brother only, but from one far above me, a true and eminent saint of God. Just as we were nearing the shore they had drawn up their anchor and spread their sails to the winds.

Three hours afterwards he was again in his cabin, resuming with more calm and collected thoughts the interrupted letter to his mother:—

"*On board the 'Mary Bannatyne,' off Portsmouth, June 9th,* 1847, 11.30 P.M.—MY DEAR MOTHER,—My embarkation has been at the last, as I will tell in detail, rather sudden and hurried. I expected not to leave London until to-morrow morning, but the ship got quickly round to Portsmouth, and last night when entering the door of Mr. Thomson's church at Woolwich to preach, a messenger from London met me to say that I must get to Portsmouth without losing an hour lest the ship should be gone. I endeavoured accordingly to leave London by the last train, but was too late, and happily so, for in case I had got away I would not have seen I.; but as it was graciously arranged, I came away at seven A.M., and had J., I., and Mrs. I. to the station, and I. all the way. He was on board during most of the day, and left us in the evening. My heart was too full to put pen to paper at that time, and I left as I thought all news for him to give; but since he went away I find that by our pilot I may still send a few lines, which I cannot omit the duty of attempting. I have now entered on a new sphere of duty and trial, I mean on board ship. Much fidelity and wisdom are needed to be a witness for the Lord in such circumstances, and I have in this matter, as well as with reference to ulterior designs, much need of fervent believing prayer. Do not forget us. May all that sail with us be given to Jesus. We have already begun worship in the cuddy, and I hope it may be continued throughout, if possible, morning and evening. I felt it a great privilege to have I. with me at the last. May this separation for the gospel be to each of us a blessing. Ah! what grace is manifested in *such* a separation! Why am I not, as many, going forth in search of mammon; or put to sea, as some are, because they are unprofitable even in man's account on land? Who maketh thee to differ? O! to live under the full influence of Christ's constraining love! To us to live will thus be Christ, and to us to die will be gain. We know not the progress nor the end of this voyage, nor what news may reach us from Britain should we reach our destination. Yet I rejoice to go. I feel that I am where it is the Lord's gracious will that I should be, and I would join with all his people in praying, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' All the ends of the earth shall yet remember and turn to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the people shall do homage unto him; for the kingdom is the LORD'S, and he is the Governor among the nations. On his vesture and on his thigh there is a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords! Now may the God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us! Salute all the brethren for us. Thus in haste again writes, dearest mother, your affectionate son,—WM. C. BURNS."

Such was his farewell, full alike of solemn tenderness, and of brave, resolute hopefulness, to his native land, and to the home of his birth and early years. The progress of his voyage, and his unwearied labours for Christ in the narrow sphere now meanwhile assigned to him, will be best followed in the words of his own journal, of which, however, our space will only permit a very few extracts:—

"*At Sea, Wednesday, June 23d*, 1847.—It is now a fortnight since I embarked in this vessel; and thus far God hath graciously prospered our way. For a week after we set sail we were detained by contrary and, in general, stormy winds at the mouth of the British Channel, but since that time the weather has been delightful, and we have been wafted speedily on our way, so that to-morrow morning, if the wind continue favourable, we shall pass by Madeira. During the first few days I was rather sick, but I have been able from the beginning to do a little at my Chinese studies, and during the last few days my progress has been, I think, encouraging. We have had public worship every evening in the public cabin, and to-day I succeeded in getting it begun also in the morning. . . .

"*At Sea, lat.* 23° *south, lon.* 29° *west. Wednesday, July* 28*th.*—It is seven weeks this day since I came on board this vessel. Hitherto we have been all mercifully preserved, and have advanced steadily, though not very rapidly, on our voyage. Some of the crew have had illness, but they are again able for their duties. I have suffered a good deal, and still suffer almost daily, from nausea, which abridges my ability for close application to study. I am, however, able to do a little from day to day in acquiring the Chinese, and occasionally I make more rapid advances. The work is pleasant and profitable from the Bible being my text-book, and in consideration of the momentous end which I have in view. Morrison was enabled to accomplish a great work in preparing such a version of the New Testament as that which it is my privilege to study. I have felt much interested by his *Memoirs*, which I am again reading. He was a *spiritual* man as well as a man of strong natural parts, and was thus both naturally and by grace qualified for the work of translation. . . .

"I have been graciously permitted hitherto to maintain family worship in the cabin every evening, and generally also in the morning, although with occasional difficulty, the desire not being as yet very great. The illness of one of the seamen opened my way a good deal in the forecastle, and I now have worship there also at least twice a week. On Sabbaths all join with us excepting one or two. When shall the cry be heard among us: 'What shall I do to be saved?' Yesterday afternoon we passed Trinidad, a very picturesque island, uninhabited except by a few goats and swine. It stands quite alone in the midst of this vast ocean. Should our voyage be favourable, we shall not again see land until near the Chinese seas. The Island of St. Paul's comes first in sight. I was glad to find on crossing the line that the heathenish practices which used to be common on shipboard, and of which Dr. Morrison gives an account in his journal forty years ago, had no place among us. All went on as usual, with only some passing allusions to the subject. Such changes among our seamen are hopeful.

'Do thou thy glory far advance
Above both sea and land,' Psalm xxxvii.

"*Lat.* 33° *south, lon.* 14° *west. Thursday, August* 5*th.*—This morning at half-past four o'clock, Thomas M'Leod, an apprentice in the ship, fell overboard and was drowned. They tried to render him assistance, but all was vain, as it was dark and rainy, and the wind was changing at the time. He was aged about seventeen, a native of Rothesay, and the son of a widow. The evening before last I had worship in the steerage or half-deck with him and some of the other men, and was led to speak specially of the danger of sudden death to which they were exposed. He seemed attentive, and answered me the question in the Shorter Catechism, 'What is Prayer?' I had also conversed and prayed with him previously when sick. This is all I can say of his case. He is, alas! now numbered with those whom 'the sea will give up' at the last day to stand before the great white throne. It is sad to see and *feel* how little this solemn event seems to affect us. Who can tell but it may be the precursor of other displays of the Lord's righteous hand? May I and others be taught to prepare for the Lord's coming! I am still enabled to continue worship morning and evening (with occasional interruptions in the morning) in the cabin. In the half-deck and in the forecastle I have the fullest liberty to do all I can for these precious souls. I am sometimes refreshed in these exercises, though I cannot see any special evidences of fruit. 'Let us not be weary in well-doing.' We are now about 1600 miles from the Cape of Good Hope. The weather has been fine hitherto, but this being the winter season in these southern regions it is now becoming cold, and may be expected to be stormy. I go on pretty regularly with my Chinese, and find it gradually become more familiar, although it is evident from the nature of the language that it must require long practice to render it at all natural to a European mind and tongue. I occupy myself much in translating the English New Testament into Chinese, and comparing these rude attempts with Morrison's version. This I find an admirable method of mastering the substance of the language, although the peculiar Chinese manner of thought and expression can only be fully attained from studying native authors. This I am also practising to a certain extent. . . .

"*Entrance of Java Sea* (*opposite North Island*), *Saturday night*, *October 9th.*—I am now near the close of another week of mercy and faithfulness manifested toward me on the part of a redeeming covenant God. On Sabbath morning last we were in shallow water, but no land had been seen, the weather being thick. At ten A.M. the curtain was uplifted, and opposite my cabin window appeared the high land of Sumatra at the mouth of Sunda Straits. This joyful sight at this moment served to unite the passengers in a short meeting for divine worship when there seemed little likelihood of their assembling, the steward having brought word that neither the captain nor any of the crew could attend. I sung Psalm cxv. 1–4, 10, read and commented shortly on Ephesians iii., and concluded with prayer. I did not go to dinner, as I wished to seek a right view of the sin of trampling on the Lord's-day, and to praise him for his great mercy in saving our ship's company from the temptation to violate it at Anjer, as they might have done.[1] . . . On Tuesday morning we were within ten miles of Anjer, sailing slowly over a glassy sea covered with the canoes of the Javanese and Malays fishing, or bringing off provisions to offer for sale. Six or seven canoes came under my cabin-window to trade with the captain, &c. I looked out to them, and when they stroked their naked arms and breasts to intimate that they wished clothes, I could only smile, shake my head, and hold up an open book (the book of God), to let them know that I was come to teach them, and not to trade or clothe their bodies. They understood my meaning, and looked to me again and again smiling, as if well pleased; and one man put his hands together as if in the attitude of prayer. In the afternoon God sent us for a short time a favourable breeze, which carried us to Anjer Bay about five o'clock; but left us outside the anchorage, which, owing to the current, we did not reach until seven A.M. of Wednesday (October 6th). . . . On Saturday forenoon we were in company of two vessels from London to China, the barque *Anne and Jane*, which sailed a fortnight before us, and the ship *Marquis of Bute*, which belongs to the same owners as this vessel, and sailed a month later. Her master, Captain Bannatyne, is from Rothesay. He was on board for some hours. It was indeed a cause of thankfulness that all this preceded the Lord's-day; and that on Sabbath (yesterday) no one came near us to be a cause of temptation. We had public worship on the poop as the day was fine. . . . I preached from Matthew xxviii. 18–20, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, &c. And, lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.' I felt much supported in opening up briefly these mighty words, and had an opportunity of speaking to present circumstances among ourselves, while I showed on the one hand the *duty* of Christ's ministers, and on the other the *duty* and *responsibility* of those *individuals*, *parents*, *masters*, &c., to whom this gospel comes in obeying it themselves, and allowing it to have free course among those placed under them. The rest of the Sabbath I spent in my own cabin, and though there was no further meeting for worship on board, yet I trust the presence of God was among us. . . .

---

[1] It had been for some days anticipated that they would reach Anjer on the Lord's-day.

"*Monday, October 25th.*—Since the previous date I have been able to do comparatively little at the Chinese on account of the heat, which has been very great and oppressive. We have made good progress during the last week, and are now about seven hundred miles only from our destination. We are to-day, however, nearly becalmed, and the future is with our God, who reigneth over all. . . . Taking into view the state of my own soul, and my future prospects in *nearing* the coast of China, I felt it duty to spend the rest of the day (Sunday, October 24th, after divine service) in my own cabin, and did not leave it to dinner or tea, or indeed at all. I trust my soul feasted in the Lord's presence, and upon his truth and grace. My heart visited many past scenes of labour and many far-distant friends and brethren in the faith of Jesus; and I enjoyed more than usual liberty and depth both in confessing sin and in pleading for grace to myself and others. . . . I have often found of late the chapters in Mr. M'Cheyne's Calendar for the daily reading ot the Scriptures exceedingly suitable to my wants. His *Memoir* and *Remains* also I find now more valuable than ever. I am reading also again, and with new interest as we approach the scene of his labours, the memoirs of Dr. Morrison the Chinese missionary. The earlier part of these memoirs especially contains a precious development of his very genuine and eminent spiritual character. He appears to have been indeed an upright servant of the living God. Oh! for grace to follow in this respect in his footsteps. Dr. Milne was a precious man of God, and his Chinese tracts—some of which I have—seem to be of much value. In these, his works, I doubt not, will follow him. His life by Philip has too much of Dr. Philip and too little of Dr. Milne to possess all the interest and importance which might belong to such a work. And yet some of the biographer's views seem striking and useful.

"*Monday*, *November* 8*th*.—Subsequently to the previous date for about ten or twelve days we had calms or very light winds, so that we made little progress except to the eastward. The captain was glad at getting so far to the east (close to the coast of Luzon, a large island belonging to the Spaniards, in which Manila is the chief port), as he counted on meeting the north-east monsoon, and so running direct across towards the north-west to Hong-Kong. But how short-sighted is human wisdom even in these natural things! On Saturday night last it began to blow a gale which continued to increase during the whole of Sabbath, and since this morning has been so very severe that some part of the main-mast has been blown away, and until this moment (half-past eight o'clock P.M.) we are running *under bare poles*, *i.e.* unable to carry the smallest sail, at the mercy of the winds and waves, or more truly at the mercy of that living God 'who bringeth the wind out of his treasures.' During the day the wind was from the west, and we were fast drifting towards the land, which is thought to be very near. Had this continued our danger must have soon been imminent; but as it is ordered in the Lord's mercy, the wind has gone more into the south, and though the storm still rages we drift rather towards our wished-for port, and the hope of deliverance gladdens every heart. I trust these things are ordered for spiritual good to some or many, as well as to manifest the glory of a present God. I have been kept in perfect peace hitherto, I trust, from having the mind stayed on the Lord. The Lord has also wondrously again begun to open a door among us for delivering the testimony of his truth. On Thursday week I found unexpectedly a favourable opportunity of asking again that public worship should be resumed;[1] and had the request granted *cordially*, although I was still to be confined to worship in the cuddy, and not to go into the forecastle. I took the liberty thankfully; but again renewed my protest against the restriction. Worship accordingly was held every night until this storm began, which made yesterday a silent Sabbath; and this evening, when I did not think of proposing worship, it was requested for the first time by one of the passengers. Thus I trust the truth is gaining ground among us. The moral atmosphere of our society has been for weeks past a good deal purified. Sung Psalm xlvi.; read Isaiah xxvi.

"*Tuesday Evening, November 9th.*—During last night the storm abated, and this morning revealed the land very near—about twelve or fifteen miles off. Had the storm overtaken us fifteen hours sooner our peril must have been imminent, as we were then within six or eight miles of the shore; and as it was, had the wind not changed from west to south we must soon have been in great jeopardy, and in still greater suspense and alarm. We have been during to-day advancing prosperously on our course, and I do trust that that almighty and holy Being whose mercies have been so great has still greater, even saving mercies in store for many among us. I am encouraged to hope this more than before, after having been much cast down about an hour ago. No one came at worship time, and the captain came in, looked at the barometer, and went on deck. I had gone into my cabin, and was spreading the matter before the Lord when the steward came to tell me the captain was waiting for worship. We had only him and Dr. Morrison, but the meeting was sweet; portion in order, Cornelius and Peter, &c. —opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles, Acts x.; and from some conversation after we had concluded I entertain the hope that I may soon have full liberty as before to visit among the crew. Should it be so, may the Holy Spirit be present giving liberty to preach Jesus crucified for sin as the refuge for dying souls, and spiritual liberty to every soul to receive him as a Saviour and Lord unto eternal life! Jesus hath the key of David. He openeth and no man shutteth. It is five months this day since I came on board this vessel. *The Lord hath been gracious and true!*

---

[1] There had latterly been less liberty in this respect than he had at first hoped.

"*Hong-Kong, Tuesday, December 7th.*—After the storm of November 8th we had favourable winds, and anchored in Hong-Kong Bay at midnight on Saturday the 13th. On Monday I came on shore, meeting a very kind and Christian welcome from the friends of the gospel here, and finding such doors of useful labour immediately opened to me, as confirm me in the soundness of those convictions of duty which brought me here. I am most comfortably boarded with a Mr. and Mrs. Power, close to the mission premises of the London Society. Mr. Stevenson[1] has been prevented from coming out to minister to the Presbyterians here, and this gives me a greater hold of my own countrymen, to whom I have opportunity of preaching once every Lord's-day in the London Society's chapel. My progress in Chinese is slow compared with my desires; but still I hope encouraging considered in the view of the difficulties of this very peculiar and hard language. On my arrival I was permitted once more to hear from my beloved parents—all well. Our deliverance from the perils of the deep appears now the greater, since we have heard within the last few days that the

---

[1] The Rev. George Stevenson, now of Pulteney Town, Wick, an early and much-valued friend, who had been invited to undertake the pastoral charge of the Free Church congregation at Hong-Kong, but had been by providential circumstances prevented.

Anne and Jane from London, with which we were in company in the Java Sea, was on the 8th ult. driven on shore near Manila and totally lost. All, however, were saved except one of the crew and a passenger, Mr. Rogers from Edinburgh, who were washed off a raft to which they had betaken themselves, and were drowned. Another vessel also narrowly escaped, getting into Manila with the loss of all her masts."

CHAPTER XIII.

1847.

THE FIELD AND ITS PIONEERS.

"China proper is a compact territory. You would only need to cut off a few projections and fill up a few indentations in order to bring it into either a circle or a square; for its length and breadth are nearly equal. It includes more than a million square miles; and lying between the twentieth and forty-second parallels of northern latitude, it enjoys on the whole an excellent climate. Two noble rivers[1] flow down its centre, and fertilize the most populous regions in the world. The ocean, sprinkled with islands, washes its eastern and southern coasts. The mountains of Thibet are its western barrier; and on the north it is still guarded by a wall thirteen hundred miles in length, which it cost the united labours of the nation to erect two thousand years ago. Over this wall or over these mountains, you instantly land on bleak deserts and barren wastes; and it is no wonder that in contrast with the encircling solitudes, the Chinese should have called their teeming soil, 'The Flowery Land.'

---

[1] The Hwang-ho and Yang-tse-kiang, the "Yellow River" and the "Son of the Ocean."

"Wide as the surface is, the swarming inhabitants require it all. From the safest calculations, as the imperial census, the present population cannot be less than three hundred and sixty millions, or a third of the world's inhabitants. To stow away such a multitude needs the utmost economy of room; and in its expedients for squeezing existence into the smallest possible compass, the Chinese continent resembles the cabin of a ship. Crops are grown in places where you would think none but the birds could have planted them; and in their anxiety to leave every inch available for culture, they contrive to put past themselves and their families in all inconceivable corners. They cannot double their area, but their genial sky allows them to double their harvests by sowing two crops in the year; and as land is so precious, many of this evenly-minded and compressible people are content to live on the water. Most of their rivers are strewed with these floating cottages."[1]

But in truth the crowded life of the Chinese people is due not so much to the narrowness of the land, as to the variety of its surface. The sterile and inhospitable character of a large part of the empire compresses a population which on the average is not more dense than that of England into a comparatively limited space. To the west are vast mountain ranges, with giant peaks, frowning gorges, and forests of cedar and of pine; in the centre is a hilly region, gradually softening down into those gentle breezy slopes on which the tea plantations flourish; while to the east and seaward there stretch out wide and fertile plains, studded with towns and villages, and cultivated every inch like one vast garden. It is this last region that constitutes that teeming hive of human life with which we are familiar, and of which alone till recently we could be said to possess any authentic knowledge.

---

[1] *China and the Chinese Mission*, by the Rev. James Hamilton, pp. 1. 2.

The people are quiet, industrious, orderly, mechanically civil, and artificially refined, deeply sunk indeed, like all heathen nations, in ungodliness and sin, but addicted rather to the quieter than the ruder vices. They are intensely sensual, but not fierce or cruel; though the very apathy and shallowness of their nature renders them on occasions singularly reckless of the shedding of blood. They love their children, and have more than any other heathen people of the sentiment of home and family life; and yet the inconvenience of an overcrowded country induces them to expose by myriads their female offspring.

Their religion is a strange medley of diverse creeds, dwelling together in peace, and blending more or less together in the ideas and life of the people. "The first of these was founded by Confucius in the sixth century. It is the religion of the literati, and of the present emperor; but there is no reason why it should be called a religion, except that its votaries believe in nothing besides. It consists of a few moral and practical maxims, and evades the existence of God and the immortality of the soul. The Confucians are the atheists and the philosophic utilitarians of China. Next comes the Taou sect, whose founder, Laou-tsze, lived in the days of Confucius. Unlike the Confucians, who believe in nothing supernatural, the followers of Laou-tsze have peopled earth and air with all sorts of spirits and demons. They deal in magic, and are constantly consulting maniacs and others whom they deem possessed; and it used to be their great problem to discover the elixir of immortality. They are the fanatics of China. And then we have a sect not of Chinese but Indian origin, and far more popular than the other two, the Buddhists. The object of their ambition is to lose all personal identity, and be absorbed into Buddha. Contemplation and abstraction of mind are their highest enjoyments, and to lose all contact with earthly things—to live 'without looking, speaking, hearing, or smelling,' is the nearest approach to perfection. They are the mystics and ascetics of China."[1] Such as it is, the religion of this strange and singular people obtrudes itself everywhere. The land teems with images. "Their temples, houses, streets, roads, hills, rivers, carriages, and ships, are full of idols; every room, niche, corner, door, and window, is plastered with charms, amulets, and emblems of idolatry."[2]

Add to these particulars one or two characteristic features more,—their singular reverence for the tombs and for the memories of their ancestors,—their ancestral tablets and ancestral religious rites; their one written, and their many spoken, languages; their universal system of education and of literary examination and degrees, upon which, by a remarkable anticipation of our recent civil service reforms, the appointment to all public offices of trust and profit depends; their strange and whimsical, but often rich and showy costume—the tails and silk robes of the men, and the cramped feet of the women; their eager curiosity, especially in the inland districts, about the persons and the movements of strangers, making the hapless traveller often ten minutes after his arrival the centre of an excited crowd, which fills doors and windows, and almost stops the traffic of the streets; their fortune-tellers, their story-tellers, their jugglers, and their rude but vastly popular stage-plays, held in the open air, at the expense usually of some rich citizen, and open to all comers; their pleasant life in canals and rivers, in boats which serve often for weeks together both for locomotion and lodging, and which, moored close to the gate of some populous town or city, make the stranger at once at home in the place of his sojourning; their multitudinous and meaningless religious ceremonies, in which there is scarcely anything of religion or religious belief; and in fine, their measurement of time not by weeks but by the periodical recurrence of market-days, evermore painfully reminding the missionary that he dwells in a Sabbathless land;—and we shall be able to form a tolerably distinct idea of the circumstances and scenes in the midst of which we have now to place ourselves, and with which, in the course of our narrative, we shall become more and more familiar.

---

[1] *China and the Chinese*, pp. 9, 10.

[2] Medhurst's *China*, p. 219.

Towards this vast and interesting field the missionary spirit of the Christian Church was at a very early period directed. So early as the 7th or 8th century, missionaries from the Nestorian churches in Persia found their way to China. And from the 14th century, onward, to the present time, the Romish Church has scarcely ever been without its missionary representatives; some of them men of devoted zeal and rare ability—Francis Xavier pre-eminent above them all; to whom, however we may estimate the character of their work or the quality of its results, belongs the undoubted honour of having been first in the field, and of having held forth a bright example of enterprise and heroism, which the reformed churches were but too slow to follow. At the time at which our narrative begins, there were in China 170 Roman Catholic missionaries, and upwards of 200,000 converts.

In the year 1806 Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, was set apart to the work in Swallow Street Scotch Church, London, under the auspices of the London Missionary Society, and arrived at Macao on September 4th, 1807. "There, in a warehouse which he rented, he plodded on in his secret labours at the language, hardly venturing out among the suspicious inhabitants, and hiding the lamp by which he studied behind a volume of *Henry's Commentary.* After ten years of toil he completed a herculean task, and printed in six quartos a *Dictionary of Chinese;*

and after being joined by a like-minded labourer, Dr. Milne, had the happiness to translate into Chinese the entire Word, which, by the amazing ingenuity and industry of a brother missionary, was printed in a new and beautiful style." He was a man indeed singularly fitted by the gifts alike of nature and of grace for the work which he had undertaken, and specially at the particular stage which that work had then reached, with "talents rather of the solid than of the showy kind; fitted more for continued labour than for sudden bursts of genius," and with a shrewd caution which was of great price in "a station where one false step at the beginning might have delayed the work for years." For eighteen long years he laboured on unobtrusively and unweariedly, himself but little seen, but his eye ever fixed on the Master and the Master's business. He died in 1834, having been preceded twelve years by his beloved brother and true yokefellow Dr. Milne. Though the time of fruit was not yet, they were honoured to gather some precious firstfruits of China unto Christ, conspicuous amongst whom were Leang Afah and Keuh Agang, who long survived them as consistent disciples and zealous and successful preachers of the gospel. But their work was that of pioneers rather than of cultivators of the land; gathering little fruit themselves, but preparing the seed for many harvests yet to come. Their true monument is the Chinese Bible and the Chinese College,[1] and the enduring memory of that "work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope" in the midst of all discouragements and difficulties, by which, though dead, they yet speak to all that follow after them, and which shall be remembered to their honour in that day "when they that sowed and they that reaped shall rejoice together." They will be ever recognized and honoured as the true fathers of the Chinese Protestant Missions and of the Chinese Protestant Church.

---

[1] The Anglo-Chinese College founded at Malacca, in 1818, for the cultivation of English and Chinese literature, and thereby promoting the propagation of Christianity in the far East. Dr. Morrison himself made the munificent offering of £1500 towards the carrying out of this object, in which we must recognize the true precursor of the educational missionary institutes originated by Dr. Duff in Hindustan twenty years later.

With the opening of the five ports to foreign residents and foreign traffic in 1842,[1] just eight years after Morrison had closed his work on earth, a great impulse was naturally given to the cause of Chinese missions, and representatives of all the great societies in Britain and in America speedily hastened to the field. Within four years there were already in China, or on the way to it, fifty Protestant missionaries. The field so long jealously guarded and hedged around was suddenly thrown open and lay white unto the harvest, and eager reapers were hastening from every side to cut it down.

Such were the main incidents in the past history of the work on which the subject of this memoir now entered, with the ardent zeal of a Xavier, with the patient constancy of a Morrison, and with a consecration of heart and an abnegation of self equal to any of those who had ever trod that distant shore.

CHAPTER XIV.

1847—1850.

BREAKING GROUND.

"Forty years have elapsed," said the Rev. James Hamilton, in his report to the Synod early in the next year, "since a young man, a native of Newcastle, and brought up in one of our Presbyterian Churches, effected his circuitous and almost clandestine passage as the first Protestant missionary to the Chinese empire. Arriving solitary on a shy and unwelcoming shore, with no Christian friend to cheer him, and no European arm to shelter him, that faithful servant of Jesus spent years of lonely and perilous toil in conquering a language with which scarce an Englishman had dared to grapple. But many a happy change, the harbinger of changes happier still, may thankfully be recognized in Mr. Burns' entrance on his work. Proceeding boldly to his destination, an honoured passenger in one of Britain's gallant argosies, and needing no alien interposition to smuggle the evangelist into a land which Britain *then* forbade the evangelist to tread, landing in open day, and beneath the glad assurance of the Union banner, he found the missionaries of two hemispheres, as well as Chinese Christians, there before him. And whilst we would join our dear friend in commemorating these bright distinctions of his lot, we record with special thankfulness the progress which he has already made as a Chinese scholar. The wonderful labours of Morrison and his coadjutors notwithstanding, the language still remains of all human dialects the mightiest barrier to intercourse; . . . and with all the helps afforded by his predecessors in this arduous work, and with all the facilities for quiet and unmolested study in an English settlement, we fully reckoned that years might pass before Mr. Burns could make any practical essay in that appalling tongue. Already, however, before faith and energy its terrors seem to disappear; and although it is only a year since our brother began to apply

---

[1] By the treaty of Nanking, 1842, the ports of Canton, Amoy, Foo-Chow, Ning-po, and Shanghai were opened, and Hong-Kong was ceded

---

to Britain. By the treaty of Tien-tsin, 1858, the ports of Neu-Chwang, Teng-Chow, Che-foo, Tai-wan, Swatow, and Kiung-Chow, and the river Yang-tse-kiang up to Hankow were opened to commerce. By convention of Peking, 1860, Tien-tsin was opened to trade, and Cowloon ceded to Britain.

his mind to the study, and though he had only been two months arrived when last he wrote—we record it with joy and wonder—he was already attempting to publish the Word of life in the speech of Sinim. Having obtained access to the prisoners in the public jail, he was enabled to read the Scriptures to them, and even to address them briefly so that they understood."

To this last incident he thus refers in his journal of date January 4th, 1848:—

"During the past month I have been making some progress in the Chinese, and have had some opportunities of bringing into use the measure of knowledge already acquired. A fortnight ago Dr. Morrison asked me to go and visit in the prison three Chinese criminals under sentence of death for murder, and who were in deep distress and anxious to be visited by the ministers of Christ. Unable to do much, I felt called to do what I could; and as the execution of the sentence was delayed longer than usual in consequence of the absence of the governor, I had almost daily opportunities of meeting these poor men. I generally went alone, but at other times in company with the Chinese preacher Chin-Seen. They were very anxious to hear of the way of salvation through Jesus, and evidently strove to understand my broken Chinese. Although unable to say much to them I made them read with me Christian books, and on several occasions I even joined with them in prayer, through the medium of their own tongue. They did not speak the Canton dialect, which I am chiefly studying, and this no doubt made my rude attempts less intelligible; yet I felt encouraged, and enjoyed, I think, something of the power of grace in praying with and for them. One of these poor men has received a commutation of his sentence."

This first beginning of his work in the sphere of direct missionary effort is characteristic, and must have been peculiarly congenial to him. Like that divine Master in whose steps he walked so closely, it was ever his delight most of all and first of all to care for those for whom few else cared, to leave the ninety and nine in the safe and quiet pastures, and go to seek the utterly lost in the far wilderness. The publicans and sinners in the highways and hedges, the neglected crowds of railway labourers or factory workers, the soldiers in the rough barrack-room, or amid the terrible temptations of the great city streets, had ever, in his native land and in Canada, had a special attraction for him, as those to whom, as most needing, he owed the deepest debt of compassion and help. He loved to walk like Christ on the shady side of the world, and to be as a "brother born" to the sorrowful, the outcast, the forsaken. And so it was that in China by a singular coincidence it happened that his first care was directed to that very class to whom three hundred years before the apostolic Xavier had looked as the probable objects of his first missionary efforts—only that now in these happier times, it was not needful to become a prisoner in order to become the teacher of prisoners. It was quite in the spirit too of his whole life thus immediately to begin his work with such imperfect means of communication as were then at his disposal, instead of waiting until a more perfect knowledge of the language should have given him the advantage of clear and fluent utterance. In haste to reach the souls of those he had come so far to seek, he was impatient of the last barrier that still separated him from them; and if he could not yet break down that partition wall, he might yet at least hold broken converse with them through those narrow chinks and openings which he had already made. He could speak only, indeed, with stammering words, and broken sentences; but those stammering words and broken sentences might still convey some grains of the precious gold—reflect some glimmerings of the eternal saving light—and that infinite blessing he dared not even for a moment withhold. Besides, while seeking to teach those poor prisoners the way of life, he would be at the same time learning something from them. He would sharpen and polish his rude instrument in the very act of using it, exercise his stammering tongue and correct his broken sentences, while by their means he sought to instruct and comfort others. It was on the same principle that, as he tells us in his first letter from Hong-Kong, he from the first attended regularly the daily Chinese service conducted by natives at the mission-house, and gave lessons in English to the boy that waited on him along with another, while "they repaid him with their Chinese, which he endeavoured to speak with them as best he could; sometimes succeeding in being understood, and sometimes provoking a smile only." Dr. Hamilton I believe is perfectly right in attributing his remarkable success in mastering the difficulties and disarming "the terrors" of this singular tongue mainly to the "faith and energy" with which he girded himself to the task. He had indeed naturally a more than ordinary faculty for the study of language, and that faculty had at an early period received the very best discipline and training; but the natural faculty was more than doubled by the intense and concentrated energy with which, when called for by the highest ends, he used it. Here, as in everything else which concerned the service of his divine Master, whatever his hand found to do he did it with his might. As before in the case of the French in Canada, so here he might be said for the time to have almost wholly lived in the element of Chinese thought and Chinese speech. He spoke Chinese, wrote Chinese, read Chinese, heard Chinese, sang in Chinese, prayed in Chinese. Far into the night sometimes might his voice be heard reciting aloud the words of life, or pouring out his heart before God, in the broken accents of that strange tongue which for Christ's sake he had determined with as little delay as possible to make his own. Six years after this, as I heard recently from a relative, when on a visit to England, he surprised a company of friends by suddenly pronouncing the blessing before meat in Chinese, and then calmly repeating the same in English. It was only an extreme instance of that which was in reality the ruling principle of his whole missionary life. From the first and in everything "to the Chinese he became as a Chinese that he might gain the Chinese"—lived in their world, thought their thoughts, spoke their words. It was thus alone, as it seems to me, that he was enabled in after-years, as the prompt and fearless pioneer of the missionary band, to make those rapid transitions from one sphere of labour to another, which required in each case the forgetting of one language and the learning of another. The acquiring of a new Chinese dialect was comparatively an easy task to him, because he lived habitually in a Chinese element, and was thoroughly imbued with the very spirit of all Chinese thought and speech.

The following extracts from his letters will still further illustrate the nature of his work, and the spirit which actuated him during the first, and necessarily in a great measure preparatory and tentative, part of his missionary life:—

"*Hong-Kong*, *Dec.* 27*th*, 1847.—MY DEAR MOTHER,—I am again allowed the opportunity of addressing you from this distant shore, that you may know something of what I am doing, and that I may find at last some vent for those feelings which the thought of those from whom I am so far removed awakens. I have been, since I last wrote, going on with my Chinese studies, and I desire to be thankful that I am enabled to make a little progress, while the difficulties that still remain to be encountered before I can attain to anything like a full mastery of the language, are so many that, were it not for the greatness of the end in view, I would be disposed to abandon the undertaking."

Then after referring to his visits to the prisoners,

"It is encouraging," he continues, "even already to be able to point even in a few expressions to the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world—to that Root of Jesse to whom the Gentiles are to seek and find his rest to be glorious. Among our own countrymen last Lord's-day was interesting, as that on which for the first time a congregation met here in connection with the Presbyterian Church. The place of meeting at present is central and convenient (an old bungalow, immediately behind the club-house); and though the numbers attending may not at first be very large, yet it is hoped that by the blessing of God this may form the beginning of that which shall issue in important results, both among the Chinese and amongst our own countrymen."

To this congregation he continued to minister during the whole period of his stated residence in Hong-Kong, without, however, undertaking the task of constituting a regular church, or "entangling himself in any way that might retard his labours among the Chinese." Meantime, while his spare time and spare thoughts were given to his countrymen, his main strength and his whole heart were still with those in whose behalf he had come, and with whom, in the whole circumstances of his life, he more and more identified himself. Leaving the comfortable lodging in a European family in which he had been at first received, he removed to a hired house of his own in the midst of the native population, where he might bury himself out of sight with Chinese companions and in a Chinese home. His mode of life there must have been a very humble one in the eyes even of his humbler neighbours, if one may judge from a significant incident which he afterwards playfully told me. There had been some commotion in the neighbourhood in consequence of some petty robbery or other misdemeanour, and an excited crowd was passing before the door in eager pursuit of the culprit. "Oh! you need not look there," cried one from amongst the throng, "*it is only a poor foreigner.*"

On the 28th March, he again writes to his mother:—

"After having had worship with my Chinese family (two servants, a teacher, and three boys) I take up my pen to endeavour to hold some kind of communication, from this distant region of the earth, with those who are dearest to me on it. I feel, as I did last time, the want of hearing from any of you; but I have been comforted in some degree by the absence of any bad news, whether by the papers or by Mrs. K.'s letters. May the living and true God be the God and Redeemer and portion of each of my beloved friends, and be more and more gracious to, and more and more glorious in the eyes of my beloved parents as they advance to the borders of the unseen and eternal world! May you be enabled to say with the divine Psalmist, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth whom I desire besides thee: my flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever!' 'As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.' May your faith be as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day! Oh! that I might hear in this far land of those of our dear kindred that as yet love not Jesus, having the eye divinely opened to behold His beauty and preciousness! For myself I am here in the midst of a people of a strange language, and who know not the true God nor Jesus Christ whom he hath sent to be the light and life of men, and yet I cannot say that I am solitary or forsaken. I feel indeed more at home here than I did when I was last among you in Scotland, when the weight of that call which I believe I obeyed in coming here was resting upon me, and making me as a stranger among my own kindred. When I last wrote I had newly taken up my abode here with my Chinese domestics, and had been encouraged by feeling able to read and pray with them (though feebly) in their own tongue. My teacher had not then joined me, and I was uncertain whether he would succeed in getting a school formed on the principles of the gospel. In this, however, I have been encouraged beyond my expectation. He got a few boys to come from a little distance of his own acquaintance, and as soon as he opened the school others came from the neighbourhood of their own accord; so that for the last fortnight he has had regularly from twelve to fifteen scholars. Were we to make any effort I believe we could get more; but in the first instance I want to go on gradually until the character of the school becomes fixed on right principles, and until I see that it really promises to accomplish more than that which I sought it for at the outset, viz. bringing me into such intercourse with the people as might enable me to acquire the language as they speak it, and might open up the way for preaching the Word among them when I am able to do this. Three of the boys stay with us in the house, and all of them come regularly to worship in the morning, when we have a little meeting of seventeen or eighteen persons in all. The school is of course shut up on Sabbath, but the last two Sabbaths most of the boys have been with us most of the day learning a Christian book, and have also attended Chinese worship of their own accord at the chapel of the London Society, where a native at present officiates. Soon after the school was opened it was interesting to me one morning about six o'clock, and before any one was on foot but myself, to see a Chinese woman with a little boy of eleven or twelve knocking to be admitted to the school. I thought of that blessed time approaching when the mothers of China will bring their children to the feet of Jesus that he may bless them. The Chinese are diligent in learning after their own manner. They begin with the morning light and continue to con over their insipid task (insipid, as we would reckon it) until evening. They are an intelligent and interesting race, and when the gospel takes hold of them in elevating and saving power, they will be interesting in another manner."

Amid such quiet, patient, but unobtrusive labours the first fourteen months of his residence in Hong-Kong passed away. Longing for great things, yet not despising the day of small things, he was content meanwhile to occupy faithfully the narrow sphere assigned him, and to wait in patience till the great Master should open a wider door. The time, however, was now come for a further and bolder flight. His proficiency in the spoken language of the Canton province was now sufficient to enable him at least intelligiby to declare his message. The shores of continental China with its teeming towns and villages lay before his eyes, and he longed to be in the midst of the vast harvest-field. It was true that as yet the permissive liberty of intercourse with the native population was confined within the limits of the five open ports, nor had any Protestant missionary hitherto extended his labours much beyond their precincts. There would, he knew, be much difficulty and possibly some danger in the attempt; but there was no manifest impossibility, and an impossibility alone was in his view a sufficient hindrance to one who would go forward in a great work in the name of the Lord. He would at least knock at the door, and see whether that divine almighty hand would open it. "You desired," said he in one of his letters, "that three doors might be opened to me,—the door of entrance into the language, the door of access into the country, and the door of admittance for the Lord's truth into men's hearts. The first of these has been opened in an encouraging degree already; and it now remains to seek by prayer and actual trial that the other two doors may be opened also." He announced accordingly the discontinuance both of his Sunday English services and of the Chinese school at Hong-Kong, and steadfastly turned his face towards the "regions beyond." On January 29th, 1849, he writes:—

"The routine of my work hitherto has been in learning the Chinese language, with the important accompaniment of preaching from week to week among my own countrymen. Now, however, I am entering as far as can be foreseen on a new sphere and mode of labour, being about to discontinue my temporary position both among the Chinese and English, and go forth among the people of these shores with the Word of eternal life in my hands, and gradually also on my tongue. Yesterday (Sabbath, 28th) I intimated the discontinuance of my English preaching, and to-day I have given warning to my servants, &c., that the school, which is at present interrupted by the Chinese New Year, will not be again re-opened. To this decision I have been clearly led, as we have yet no prospect of any minister from Scotland, nor of any other missionary who might take up the educational part of the work among the Chinese, and I had but one alternative before me, viz. that of either proceeding to form a church and locating myself among my countrymen and in my Chinese school; or that of leaving both, and going forth into the field at large in order at once to attain in a proper manner the spoken language, and to spread abroad the gospel of salvation among these unsaved millions. This latter course I have felt it my duty to adopt, although it is one accompanied with many difficulties and dangers of different kinds. But the work must be done, and I am enabled joyfully to say, 'Lord, here am I, send me.' The young man who has been teaching the school and myself will not, I think, return to me; but the other two assistants will go forth, I trust, with me, and perhaps others also. Certainly my past habits and experience fit me above most preachers for attempting this mode of missionary work; but whether, and how far, I may be succeeded in it is with the Lord, at whose command alone I go forth. I need not add that in these circumstances I shall have special need of special prayer to be made in my behalf, and in behalf of the people among whom I may be led from time to time. With love to all who love the Lord and seek his face,—I am, dear mother, your affectionate son,—Wm. C. Burns."

The event fully justified the decision which he had taken, and the brave and resolute spirit in which he prepared himself for its accomplishment. The difficulties and dangers with which he laid his account were indeed not wanting, but in the midst of them all his way was opened and his course prospered to a degree which he had scarcely dared to hope. While there were frequent risks from the assaults of robbers and the jealous spirit and policy of the local authorities, he met everywhere amongst the great body of the people with that friendly reception which they have been since found in other cases to accord to any stranger who frankly casts himself upon their kindness. He possessed in large measure that genial human sympathy, and that quiet self-possession and promptitude of fit reply, which, Mr. Fortune tells us, form the best passports to the good humour and friendly entertainment of a Chinese crowd; and a foreigner who trusts himself in places where foreigners are rare must expect to live very much in the midst of crowds. So he found his way with comparatively little trouble or interruption from village to village, and seldom failed at least of a numerous and inquisitive, if not earnestly attentive audience. Even the personal privations and hardships which he had regarded as inevitable were much less serious than he had anticipated; so that he very soon sent back to Hong-Kong a heavy cloak which he had brought away with him, with the significant message that "he did *not* need to sleep on the hills." His chief danger throughout arose from the general repute, sadly belied in his case, of the untold wealth possessed by foreigners, and the consequent sensation produced among the robber-class by the arrival of a European stranger. Anything therefore in the shape of gold, or that looked like gold, he found the greatest possible hindrance to his quiet and peaceful progress, and a light purse the necessary condition of a light heart. Years after this I remember that when I gave him a small pocket-Bible in place of a much valued one which he had lost, he said with a significant smile, that his only objection to it was the gilt clasp, which he feared would one day attract the greedy eyes of some Chinese robber, and cause the theft of the book for the sake of the gold—an apprehension which was soon afterwards in point of fact fulfilled. From the following extracts it will be seen that such "perils of robbers" were the only serious perils he encountered in this difficult, and as it seemed to many at the time, somewhat daring undertaking:—

"*At Shap-Pat-Hœung* (*or Eighteen Villages*), *February* 26*th*, 1849.—MY DEAR MOTHER,—I have had the privilege of again hearing from you, and this privilege has been even greater than usual, from the fact which the date of this letter intimates, that I am now no more among our countrymen, but am dwelling among this heathen people—*alone*, were it not for the presence of a covenant God and Saviour. In following out the purpose intimated in my last, I left Hong-Kong on Wednesday the 7th current for the opposite continent of China, and have been, since that time, going from place to place with my Chinese assistants and one servant, much as I used to do in Scotland in days that are past. In some places I have spent only one day; in others I have remained for a longer time, the population being large and the door open. As yet I have been furthered and prospered far beyond what I looked for; and although the difficulties are many, even of an outward kind, yet I do not despond in looking to the future. One of our difficulties arises from the constant fear the people are in of robbers, who suppose, though in my case without cause, that foreigners have much money with them; and again in places where there are mandarins a foreigner is likely to be dislodged at once. This was my experience at first setting out; for I had spent only one night at Cowloon, opposite to Hong-Kong, when I was warned to remove, and so had to retreat for the time. The people also at present are in constant apprehension of war with England, and this makes them more suspicious of foreigners who come into their borders. But with all this I have hitherto had great liberty of access to the population, and as far as I have been able to declare my message I have found attentive, and in some cases earnestly attentive hearers. . . . The valley I am now in is full of villages, as its name intimates. It is also the seat of a market held nearly every third day, to which the people of the surrounding country resort, and this makes it an important centre of operations. Yesterday—the Christian Sabbath—was the market-day here. I was out among the people about three hours, and had much support from God. What need have I of the presence of the Lord of the Sabbath in a land like this, that I may not lose my own soul in seeking to save the souls of others! I shall probably need to leave this place soon, as the master of the house I am now in does not promise us lodgings even for another night. But the Lord will provide. 'They shall not be ashamed that wait for me.'"

At his first starting from Hong-Kong he had characteristically "left his assistants to direct the boat to any quarter," on the long extended coast, "they thought best," having "no other plan but that of making known the gospel by tracts and speech, leaving all the rest, as well as this the greatest, to the gracious care of God." And so he went on from day to day in his work of faith and patience, passing on from village to village with the divine message, which it was the joy of his life to declare, simply as the Unseen Hand of his Master seemed to open and point the way—now lingering for a while in one spot, now pressing rapidly on, as the Pillar of Cloud appeared to halt or to move onwards before him. "As soon as he reached a village, he commenced to read his Bible aloud, say, under the shade of a tree—soon the villagers began to gather, and he explained to them the nature and object of the Gospel. Usually some one would ask him at meal-time where he was to eat? and he as usually partook of what was set before him by some hospitable villager. As evening approached, some one would offer him a night's shelter; and thus he often went on from week to week, preaching the word, and lacking nothing." Meanwhile, it was his lot almost wholly "to plough in hope, and to sow in hope,"—intensely longing for the fruit of souls, yet willing either to gather it in with his own hands or to sow the seeds of a harvest to be reaped by others. The entries in his journal are at this period singularly brief and hurried—mere jottings, evidently hastily noted down overnight in the midst of outward discomforts and almost constant movement—but only on that account speak the more impressively of the abundance and self-denying nature of his labours:—

"We went to Cowloon, but they took me to a school-house rented by the London Mission, and after one day's stay among a listless people we were obliged to leave in consequence of the mandarin's remonstrating with the landlord of the house. On Thursday the London missionaries came over, and I went back with them to the Chinese Medical Hospital (Hong-Kong). On Friday we again landed directly opposite at Tseen-Shā-Tein, had good openings and favour among the villages, and lodged in a mat-shed—I eating, as I had the previous day, and have done since, with my Chinese companions, but not putting on in the meantime any part of the Chinese dress. On Saturday we removed to Tseen Wan (Shallow Bay) village, a distance of perhaps twenty-five Chinese miles; the people very friendly, but generally spaking the Hāk-kā, not the Puntee or Canton city dialect. Here we remained until Wednesday (yesterday), when we crossed the hills, a distance of 20 or 25 Chinese miles (probably 7 or 8 English miles), to this valley covered with villages (Shap-Pat-Hœung). To-day I have been out, and have had more encouragement in the aspect of the people, and also in my ability to communicate to them the great truths, (1) That there is but one true God, His character, &c.; (2) That all men are sinners—idolators, &c.; and (3) That there is a Saviour, and only one, Jesus the Son of the living God. . . .

"*Shum-Chan, March 5th, Monday.*—Came here on Friday, after being six days at Shap-Pat-Hœung, and three days at Sin-Teen. People friendly. Arrived on the market-day. Great press to see the foreigner, but all friendly. On Saturday messenger arrived from Hong-Kong—robbed by the way of the money he was bringing. In my own room—not an every-day privilege in this land.—*Oh! for the Spirit of grace to improve it.*

"*Chinese Hospital, Hong-Kong, March 29th.*—We staid at Shum-Chan until Wednesday the 14th, visiting the surrounding villages. 14th. Removed westward to Sheung-Poo-Tan, visiting villages to the west, Kak-Teen, Kong-Ha, Wong-Kong, &c., eight days. At Sheun-Poo-Tan, people very friendly and attentive—Kak-Teen, not so. Thursday, returned to Shum-Chan; invited to go back into the country; crossed the Yuen-Long, and thence on foot to Pai-Teung beside Cap-Shui-Man, and thence by boat to this place—way prospered—arrived here at six o'clock P.M., just as Dr. Hirschberg, a dear brother who gives us lodging here, was about to land from Cowloon, to which he goes every Monday. Here I have ordered a Chinese dress, and I trust that next week I may again go forth into the country. The seven weeks I have already spent there have been full of encouragement."

Brief as these itinerary notes are, they will give the reader a tolerably distinct idea of the character of the missionary's life and work during this first and tentative effort to carry the gospel message into the interior of the Chinese territory. The lodging in the "mat-shed;" the frequent alarms of robbers; the arrival of the messenger from Hong-Kong without the expected money supplies; the summary dismissal by the mandarin, and the friendly bearing of the people generally; the eager rush at the market town "to see the foreigner;" the valleys thick-sown with villages; the journeys on foot over the hills; the significant and touching allusion to the rare privilege of a night "in his own room;" the brief breathing time of retirement and prayer, in the midst of the poor and suffering, in the Chinese hospital,—all, naked as they are alike of detail and colouring, form together the elements of a picture of apostolic faith and zeal, and self-denying labour which rises to the mind's eye as vivid as it is impressive and rare.

After about a week's repose, Mr. Burns was again at his work (April 1st), and continued his evangelistic movements amongst the continental villages for about six weeks longer, pushing his way still further inland to the north and the west. At the close of that period, however, the hot and rainy season rendered further progress for the present impracticable, while at the same time the more suspicious and less friendly attitude of the people as he advanced westward gradually more and more closed the door against him. He accordingly returned to Hong-Kong, and took up his abode in a manner somewhat more permanent, under the friendly roof of his endeared friend Dr. Hirschberg, first on Morrison's Hill, and then at his new hospital in Victoria.

Here he remained, with only one brief interruption, for the next eight months, perfecting his knowledge of the Chinese language, and becoming, as he says, less and less "at home with the pen and more with the Chinese pencil;" doing the work of a Barnabas amongst the sick and suffering in the hospital beside him; and co-operating zealously with his esteemed host in all his other works and labours of love. But the nature of his occupations during this quiet interval, as well as the views and aspirations which animated him, will be best learned from his own words, which will appropriately close the history of this first stage of his Chinese life:—

"*Chinese Hospital, Hong-Kong, June 21st*, 1849.—MY DEAR MOTHER,—My last letter would not prepare you for hearing from me again so soon, and that too from this place. I went on last occasion more to the westward (having already visited a good part of those who speak my dialect to the north), and there we found the people everywhere so averse to the presence of a foreigner, that after sleeping nine successive nights on the water in going from place to place, and not being allowed to lodge on shore, I returned here, where I have again resumed my quiet studies, and where I enjoy opportunities of doing what I can amongst this people, not only in speaking to the patients in the hospital, but in visiting others in the neighbourhood. The season also at present, both from great rain and great heat, is not so favourable for that mode of life which I have been following for some previous months on the opposite continent. I trust that in due time my path may be further opened, and that it may graciously be made plain by the Lord in what way and in what place I am to be more permanently employed upon these shores. I do not think at present of returning to the continent, but it is possible that my path may be made plain to do so sooner than

I can anticipate. Perhaps you are by this time aware that Dr. James Young, a much valued friend here, offered himself some time ago to the Presbyterian Church in England as a missionary. The last mail has brought to him the intimation of his offer of service being accepted; but where and how we may be located and employed on these shores is not yet fully determined; nor can Dr. Y. leave his present employment until the close of the present year. It was a great mercy that in my last journey as well as in the two previous ones I was preserved from every danger, although surrounded with perils seen and unseen. The night before I landed here we were not, I suppose, above half a mile from a Macao passage-boat when it was attacked by pirates and robbed with the loss of some lives. The firing was so loud that, in the darkness, we supposed it must be some English war-steamer in pursuit of pirates. I was at this time on board the Chinese passage-boat from Canton, and no evil was allowed to come nigh to us. The person who has charge of the Chinese hospital where I am now lodged is a converted Jew, Dr. Hirschberg, connected with the London Missionary Society. I have long enjoyed his friendship, and now for a season I am very favourably situated in lodging with him, both for learning the language and for speaking a little among the patients who come seeking cure to their bodily diseases. It is little indeed, however, that I can add regarding tokens of an encouraging nature among the people. But the day of mercy and deliverance promised will come, and then these ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord. You have need to pray for all of us who labour here, that we may be endued with a patient and persevering spirit, for the natural and spiritual difficulties of the field are of no common kind. . . . Commend me, dear mother, to the prayers of God's people. May you and my father never forget me, when, either one or both, you draw near the glorious high throne of our Father in heaven. Jesus is the way. In His blood we have access: in Him we are complete!"

Again, about a month after, July 25th, he writes:—

"I take up my pen (not so much used in these days as my Chinese pencil) to write a few lines that you may know something of my present affairs. During the past month I have been quietly resident here; and while I have thus enjoyed much leisure for study, I have also had daily opportunities of taking part, both as a hearer and as a speaker, in the meetings which are held for the good of the patients and of the household. As I had no present need for my former native assistants who journeyed with me on the mainland, they left me more than a month ago, and I am thus in the meantime alone, and co-operating with others as formerly at home and in my own tongue. This kind of position suits me, and will probably continue to be my position here until at least Dr. Young is ready to join me, which is not until the beginning of next year. . . . You will remember me, dear father, to all who ask of my welfare, and engage the praying to pray much and more in our behalf, and that China's gates may be opened to the King of glory!"

One more effort (November, 1849) to resume his evangelistic labours on the mainland, in which he was met with obstacles still more formidable than on the last occasion, and returned, robbed and stripped of everything but the clothes necessary to cover him, and his work at Hong-Kong and its vicinity closed. He sailed with Dr. Young, whose brief but bright career was for the next four years intimately associated with his, for Canton on the last day of February, 1850.

CHAPTER XV.

1850–51.

CANTON.

We have already remarked that Mr. Burns' labours on Chinese soil had been hitherto mainly preparatory and tentative. The question of a permanent centre of operations for the infant mission had not even yet been determined.

The balance of opinion, however, in the home committee had been for some time back turning more and more decidedly towards Amoy, and in this judgment Dr. Young very strongly concurred. Mr. Burns himself so far acquiesced in it as to have actually taken his passage for that port on September 5th, 1849, when his course was arrested by an attack of fever, brought on as he thought by the anxieties of the decision and exposure to the sun during the numerous "salutations" of a hurried leave-taking. The decision, however, had clearly not been taken without some misgiving. On his recovery from illness the suspended purpose was for the present silently dropped, and was never afterwards resumed, until he had fully proved by prayer and earnest effort whether another and still wider door nearer at hand were not open to him. It is probable that from the first, and whilst wandering amongst the villages opposite Hong-Kong, his eye had been turned towards Canton, the great centre of life in Southern China, towards which at each successive movement westward he approached nearer and nearer. Cowloon, the point at which he first landed, is distant from that city only about ninety miles, and the whole district lying between, and which he had been since traversing, might be regarded as in its immediate vicinity, and as the natural pathway of advance towards it. It was the great centre, too, of that dialect which for the last two years he had been so laboriously studying, and which was the only form of the Chinese spoken language which as yet he knew.

The prospect at the outset was not very encouraging, nor did it on further trial greatly brighten. The door of entrance even to a settled residence in the city was never fully opened to him. He succeeded, indeed, at last, after many harassing disappointments, in securing the expiring lease of a lodging from a brother missionary about to return to Scotland; but that was only for a period of eight months, and at its close his position would be as unfixed and as uncertain as ever. In other respects, too, the aspect of the field was scarcely more promising. Whilst he enjoyed abundant opportunities of sowing the precious seed, and was seldom without a goodly group of apparently attentive hearers, yet it seemed to him that his words did not tell upon them. There was attention more or less fixed, but no impression. They listened to the truth, and possibly carried away some glimpses of it, but it did not take hold and keep hold of them. Few of his casual hearers ever came back of their own accord to hear him again, or sought the preacher out to inquire further of his message and his doctrine. He was even tempted sometimes to doubt if the Chinese were in their present state even susceptible of those deep spiritual impressions which he had seen in former days and longed to see again; whether a lengthened period of preparation, and the long and patient sowing of many labourers, might not be necessary ere any one might hope to "return rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him." Yet he went on patiently and hopefully, and speaks of himself as as happy here and in the midst of his self-denying and apparently unproductive work as "he could be anywhere in all the world." There is nothing in his life, as it seems to me, more admirable, and in the whole circumstances of the case more remarkable, than this patient and steadfast continuance in well-doing in the midst of the most prosaic and uninteresting labours, and amid the dead calm of a more than heathen apathy, equally as when borne along by the exhilarating breath of sympathetic enthusiasm and almost uninterrupted success. "The two works," says Mr. Moody Stuart, "were singularly diverse in their character, and were such as have rarely, if ever before, been allotted to one man to accomplish. Those who knew William Burns only as the enthusiastic preacher from town to town throughout the land would have looked upon him as the last man in the Church who, after eight years of what seemed the highest religious excitement, with thousands crowding to hear him, would set himself to what was then reckoned the almost hopeless task of thoroughly mastering the Chinese language; would seclude himself from his own countrymen, and live among a people so different, teaching their children that he might learn their language, and then adopt their dress, and their ways, till in strange places the authorities were sometimes slow to believe him when he claimed to be an Englishman." Such mainly had been his work for many months at Hong-Kong, and such too, at least not more exciting or spirit-stirring, was his life at Canton. Meanwhile Dr. Young had gone on before him to Amoy, and wrote from month to month most hopefully of the prospects of the work there, and urged him earnestly to join him. He still hesitated. There was not much indeed in the way of positive encouragement to detain him at Canton; no "great and effectual door" visibly open to him and loudly calling upon him to enter; but yet there was not, on the other hand, any clear and decisive indication that God had no work for him to do there. It even seemed to him sometimes as the months passed on as though a prospect of ultimate success were beginning to dawn upon him, and as he saw the stolid countenances of his hearers now and then lightening up with something like intelligent and earnest interest, his heart yearned over them with a wistful hopefulness, and he felt as if he could not leave them so long as the faintest hope of a day of power and blessing among them remained:—"If you do not hear," said he, "so interesting accounts from Canton" (as those recently received from Amoy), "you must ascribe it in part to the defects of your correspondent, but still more, it may be, to the difficulties of this very important station—a station so difficult and important, that I believe no agent who is in any degree suited for it, and who has a heart to love and labour for its proud and suspicious people, should be encouraged to leave it. Last Tuesday evening, when looking on an assembly of from fifty to sixty engaged listeners, while a native was addressing them before I did so, my heart said, 'How can I leave these dear and precious souls for whom there are so few to care? I can now tell them of the way of life with some measure of clearness and acceptance, and so long as God gives me standing ground to gather and address them, I must go on to do so, leaving the issues in His own hand, with whom it is to bless and save! Help us to maintain the combat in this great heathen city, until its gates are opened to the King of glory! Brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified!"

But those distinct intimations of the Master's will, for which he had so long waited, came, as he thought, at last. The door he had sought and hoped to enter was finally closed; the standing-ground which alone he desiderated as a warrant to remain was taken from him. Shortly after the expiry of the lease, he had received notice to remove from the premises he had hitherto occupied, and all efforts to obtain another suitable station had failed. This, taken in connection with the open door and brightening prospects at Amoy, seemed to him decisive of the path of duty. Difficulties in the ordinary sense of the word had little influence with him: rather only did they rouse him to a more determined resolution to "go forward" in the course of service set before him, in the strength of Him before whom the mountains flow down, and whose word is "not bound;" but the slightest indication of His will, the faintest whisper of His voice, was to him imperative. Such an intimation had now, he believed, been distinctly given to him; and he prepared himself without delay to obey it. He sailed from Canton,[1] after a residence of sixteen months, in June, 1851, and reached Amoy on the 5th day of next month.

---

[1] [Though there seemed to be no "open door" for him, there were

CHAPTER XVI.

1851–54.

AMOY.

A sail of four hundred miles in a north-easterly direction from Hong-Kong, along a bold and precipitous coast, rising occasionally to a commanding elevation, brings us to a group of islands scattered over the wide and spacious estuary of one of those rivers which here and there break the continuity of the rocky barrier. One of these is Amoy, separated from the mainland only by a narrow channel, in the midst of which again lies the smaller islet of Ku-long-soo, facing the town and harbour, and forming in the waters between an inner and safer anchorage. In approaching the city through this inlet, a long line of fortifications, rising from the water's edge and bristling with cannon, frowns upon us from the right, and would be indeed a formidable defence were an invading enemy simple enough to advance in this direction. Though only a small island of nine or ten miles diameter, and consisting mainly of rugged and barren hills, with here and there cultivated valleys running up between them, it contains within its narrow bounds upwards of a hundred towns and villages, and a population of 250,000 souls.

Of this teeming hive of human life, about 150,000 are congregated in the city which occupies the south-west corner

---

several missionaries, at the time, labouring there, as we believe there still are.—ED.]

of the island. It is a poor place, with close narrow streets, and rather more dirty than most other Chinese towns. "The people have generally an emaciated and sallow appearance, partly from poverty and the crowded state in which they live, but also from the prevalence of opium-smoking. There are upwards of 600 public opium-smoking places, and the drug is said to be used very extensively in private houses."

Though not a place of very great commercial importance, it is, by its position and easy means of communication, a most convenient and commanding centre for missionary operations. Though within the limits of Southern China, it yet forms a sort of advanced post towards the north, with which communication is frequent and easy. Before it lies the vast province of Fo-kien, the great black-tea country, with its teeming myriads of industrious, peaceful, and comparatively friendly people; and behind it, at the distance of a few hours' sail, the beautiful island of Formosa, with its three millions of Chinese-speaking inhabitants. Within a distance of ninety miles is a population of some millions, speaking nearly the same dialect, and accessible in many parts by canal and river navigation. The city of Chang-chow alone, of which Amoy may be said to be the port, lying a few miles up the river, contains a population of from 200,000 to 500,000 souls. The view here as described by travellers is magnificent. "I had heard," says the Rev. Wm. Gillespie, of the London Missionary Society, "of the plain of Chang-chow; now I saw it. From a hill at the back of the city, yet within the walls, a grand panorama presented itself. There lay stretching far up the country a rich and luxuriant strath, and a noble river winding along at the foot of the hills. It reminded me of the strath of Tay."

Over this wide and fertile garden of souls the Christian missionary is free, with scarcely any hindrance, to roam at large. "In visiting Amoy," says the same writer just quoted, "the first thing that strikes a foreigner coming from the south, is the feeling of delight which he experiences in rambling everywhere unmolested. After being forcibly turned back on entering within the gates of the southern metropolis, as has been my experience repeatedly, it is pleasant to revel in the unrestrained luxury of rambling through the streets and everywhere within and without the walls of Cap-che, Amoy, Chang-chow, &c."

When Dr. Young reached Amoy in March, 1850, he found two bands of labourers already on the field:—Messrs. Stronach and Young of the London Society, and Messrs. Talmage and Doty of the American Board of Missions. Both of them had hopefully broken ground, and numbered at this time between them twenty adult converts, of whom eight belonged to the former, and twelve to the latter. Into hearty sympathy and co-operation with these brethren Dr. Young at once entered, whilst devoting himself specially to that department of the work which more peculiarly belonged to him. He was soon at the head of two native schools numbering together thirty children, who rapidly grew to eighty, and "over some of whom he was in due time permitted to rejoice as Christians," besides a hospital for the sick, in which while he ministered to the diseases of the body, two native evangelists pointed the way to the Divine Physician of souls. He was especially useful in curing the disease of opium-smoking, by the introduction of a medicine which soothed the imperious craving for the noxious drug, and thus rendered the effort to break off the habit more easy. By means of this treatment many permanent cures were effected, and the demand for the medicine was soon so great as to become a self-supporting business. Into the work thus hopefully begun Mr. Burns at once threw himself with characteristic energy, locating himself in the midst of the native population in an upper chamber above the school, and commencing the study of the Amoy dialect with the sound of Chinese voices perpetually in his ears. A few days afterwards he gives his first impressions of the place and of the work in a letter to his mother:—

"*Amoy, July* 25*th*, 1851.—MY DEAR MOTHER,—As you see from the date I am now at Amoy, having left Canton only a few days after I last wrote you, and having been here already ten days. My expectations of getting the house I had in view at Canton were completely disappointed, and my way seemed hedged up to come here. I embarked accordingly at Whampoa in the English barque *Herald* for Amoy on the evening of June 26th, and after spending the Sabbath and Monday at Hong-Kong by the way, we reached here on the forenoon of July 5th. The passage was a delightful one, and very refreshing to the bodily frame after sixteen months in Canton. The days I spent in Hong-Kong were pleasant. I had two opportunities of preaching in Chinese, and stayed with my old friend Dr. Hirschberg. . . . I have found a very kind Christian welcome among the missionary brethren, English and American, here, and my expectations are more than exceeded in all I have seen as yet of Amoy as a place and as a missionary station. I stayed for three nights with Mr. and Mrs. Stronach of the London Missionary Society, members of old in the Albany Street Congregational Church, Edinburgh; and I am now very much to my mind lodged in the middle of the Chinese population, in a little room connected with the school which was made over to Dr. Young by an American missionary on his removal here a year ago. Thus settled down amid Chinese voices, and with a Christian native servant (who prays with me; I cannot yet pray with him in his own dialect), and a Chinese teacher who comes daily, I am endeavouring to exchange my Canton for the Amoy Chinese. To speak this new dialect publicly and well may require a good deal of time; but even already I can make myself easily understood about common things, and am able to follow a good deal of what I hear in Chinese preaching. Dr. and Mrs. Young are well, and seem to be getting on well, through the divine blessing and guidance. I feel it a great privilege to be connected with him as well as with the other missionary brethren here, who all go on in much harmony, and not without tokens of divine encouragement. The people here present a striking contrast to the people of Canton in their feelings and deportment towards foreigners. Here all is quiet and friendly, and although there is here also a great apathy on the subject of the gospel, yet a good many seem to listen with attention, and the missionaries have inquirers who come to be taught. I was preaching last Sabbath-day (in English of course) from the words: 'Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold' (Matthew xxiv.); and, alas! I felt they were solemnly applicable to my own state of heart. Unless the Lord the Spirit continually uphold and quicken, oh! how benumbing is daily contact with heathenism! But the Lord is faithful, and has promised to be 'as rivers of water in a dry place, and as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.' May you and all God's professing people in a land more favoured, but, alas! also more guilty, experience much of the Lord's own presence, power, and blessing, and when the enemy comes in as a flood, may the Spirit of the Lord—yea, it is said, 'the Spirit of the Lord *shall*—lift up a standard against him.'"

His allusion here, as well as often in other letters, to the "benumbing influence of continual contact with heathenism," and the danger generally of losing the keen edge and high tone of practical godliness while dwelling in a land in which all the usual means and incentives of the spiritual life are in so great a measure withdrawn, is at once touching and instructive, and suggests to us an aspect of the missionary life which most of us at home but little think of. We are apt to regard the Christian missionary as, by the very act of his consecration to so sublime a vocation, at once raised to a region of exalted faith and fervour far above us, in which all the ordinary perils to the life of the soul are unknown. The idea of a carnal, formal, perfunctory, unspiritual, and common-place missionary, seems to us almost a contradiction in terms. We think naturally of those brave athletes of the

Cross very much as ordinary Christians in early days thought of the ascetic recluses of the desert, as men by the very nature of their calling pre-eminently devoted in heart to God, and almost as a matter of course and *ipso facto*, "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." No mistake, I believe, can be more grievous. The whole history of missionary life and labour abundantly shows how possible it is to lose the life of faith, even while seeking the propagation of the faith; to leave house and home and kindred for Christ's sake and the gospel's, and yet in a heathen land to breathe little either of the love of Christ or the grace of the gospel. Most of us little think how hard a thing it must be for a solitary wanderer in such a land as China, to maintain the life of Christian godliness in the very atmosphere and element of heathenism—without a Sabbath; without Christian fellowship or brotherhood; without a Christian face to look into or a Christian hand to grasp; with an utter disbelief of all Christian truths, and of everything belonging to a higher world, looking out from the eyes of all around him; with nothing left to feed the inner springs of the soul, but his Bible, his closet (if indeed he can command a closet), and his God. The brightest lamp will burn dim in an impure and rarified atmosphere. It is only by a special miracle that the children of Israel can thrive and be of fair countenance on the pulse and water of Babylon. The palm-tree of the desert "knoweth not when heat cometh," but it is because its roots are watered by hidden springs far under ground. We can understand then how it was that the subject of this memoir, while wandering amid the heathen villages on the mainland, so intensely longed for a Sabbath at Hong-Kong, and so continually cast himself on the succour of his brethren's prayers, not only for the success of his labours, but for the very life of his own soul. "The wilderness and the solitary place" were indeed often made glad for him, and the parched ground became as "a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water;" but he felt that it was so, and could only be so, by a special miracle of grace.

The effort "to exchange the Canton for the Amoy Chinese," did not prove so arduous a one as he had probably expected. Embued as he now was with the spirit and fundamental principles of the language, the transition from one form of it to another became to him comparatively natural and easy. While, as we have seen, he was from the first able to make himself understood on common matters, and to comprehend a good deal of what he heard in the public worship of God, its unaccustomed form soon became sufficiently familiar to him to admit of his himself using it in public discourse. By the beginning of the next year we find him again at his congenial work of spreading the good news of the kingdom among the towns and villages around, where the name of Christ had not yet been named: of date February 7, 1852, he writes in his journal:—

> "I am now engaged a good deal in the work of spreading the gospel among this people, being in the gracious arrangements of God's providence favoured with the co-operation of professing Christians, both in-doors and in the open air. One of these, baptized since I came here by the American missionaries, aids me regularly, and others from time to time. We have meetings in the chapel of Sai-Hang, where Dr. Young resides, but get greater numbers in the open air when giving addresses in the open places of the city. During this week I also went to the neighbouring country (on the island) among the villages, spending a night in one of these in the house of my servant, and preaching the word with my companions T. and K. in six different villages. . . . The work increases in interest and hopefulness. 'Thy kingdom come!'"

In another excursion (March 16th) he crossed over to the mainland directly opposite Amoy; and in the course of seven days made a circuit of thirty villages, sowing everywhere plenteously the precious seed. Everywhere they were most kindly welcomed, everywhere met with numerous, willing, and often attentive audiences, were everywhere hospitably entertained by the people free of charge; and such was the missionary's sense of the promising aspect of the field, and of the urgent need of additional labourers to reap the ripening harvest, that he gave a whole year's salary to the funds of the Committee to hasten on the work.[1] "Surely," said the convener in giving in the next report, "that field is ripe unto harvest, when the reaper sends home his own wages to fetch out another labourer!"

The next year his expedition took a wider range, including the great city of Chang-chow, already referred to as the chief centre of population in this part of the province.

"*Amoy, May 16th*, 1853.—Last month I had the privilege of paying a visit to Chang-chow-foo, a large city in this neighbourhood, at the distance of about 30 English miles. We left Amoy on the morning of April 13, and returned here on the 26th, being absent about a fortnight, nine days of which were spent at Chang-chow, preaching to large and very interesting audiences both inside and outside the city. A week or two before our going, two native Christians, of the American Mission here, had visited Chang-chow, and preached to crowds for a number of days with much encouragement; and as they were purposing to go again, at the earnest desire especially of one of them, it was arranged that I should also go, although there was some reason to fear that, unless God should graciously open our way, there might be some unwillingness on the part of the authorities to allow a foreigner to pay more than a brief visit, or to preach at large to the people. To avoid difficulty as far as possible, it was arranged that we should live on the river, in the boat which carried us there, going on shore only to preach. On our arrival we immediately went on shore, and being at once surrounded by many people, we had a fine opportunity, within a few steps of our boat, of preaching the Word of Life fully and without hindrance. We continued thus to preach on the bank of the river for three days, going upwards from our boat in the morning, and downwards in the afternoon, and addressing large companies for three or four hours at a time, until we had exhausted all the suitable stations near the river. We then went inwards, but still outside the walls, and at the very first station at which we preached, a man came forward and pressed us to go further on, and preach again opposite his house. This man the following morning came and was with us at worship in our boat; and when it began to rain, and our boat was more uncomfortable, the same individual opened his house to us, and here we stayed (making the man a small remuneration) for five days; and going on from this as our head-quarters, still inwards, we enjoyed the fullest liberty, both within and without the city, of preaching to large and very much engaged audiences. I do not think, upon the whole, that I have spent so interesting a season, or enjoyed so fine an opportunity of preaching the Word of Life since I came to China, as during these nine days. The people were everywhere urgent in requesting that a place might be opened for the regular preaching of the gospel among them; and I am glad to say that the American Mission here have already sent two of the members of the native church to open an out-station in this important and very promising locality. Since our return here there have also three individuals come here at their own expense, to inquire further into the nature of the gospel. The native Christians with me were the same with whom I went last year in making some visits to the neighbourhood; and I have pleasure in adding, that they seem to be moved by love to the Saviour, and to the souls of their fellow-countrymen, in giving themselves to this work."

---

[1] £250.

In a private letter of the same date, after referring more briefly to the above particulars, he adds,

"We had all" (himself and three Chinese evangelists) "full work; for our meetings (of course in the open air) generally lasted three or four hours, becoming the longer the more interesting. You would have rejoiced could you have seen me the last two evenings of our stay addressing a large and attentive audience until the moon was up (it generally fell to me to speak last); I felt thankful, indeed, in such circumstances that it was my privilege to be sent to China to preach Christ crucified as the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. The time at which we were thus engaged was just during the meeting of the English Synod, and we may believe that in this the promise is fulfilled, 'While they are yet speaking, I will hear.'"

To any one who ever knew the writer of these lines, and who remembers how sparing he was of his words, and how jealously guarded in everything that related to himself, how little account too he made of mere surface appearances of interest and attention, it must be evident how much more is implied in such expressions as coming from him, than that which meets the eye. Evidently when he speaks thus his words must have been visibly telling on the hearts of his hearers, and he must have felt sure from the hushed silence and earnest look with which they listened to him, that a power was at work within them mightier than his words, and such as he had never known on Chinese soil before. At Canton he had complained that though the Chinese listened with a sort of listless attention to the gospel message, it never seemed to "take hold" of the Chinese mind. It was clearly taking hold of the Chinese mind now.

His power of access, indeed, to the confidence and regard of the Chinese people, and the influence he exerted over them, seems to have been something remarkable, and far beyond what one would ever gather from anything he ever said of himself. Indeed the chief difficulty of his biographer arises from his rigid habit of understating, rather than amplifying everything that regarded himself, and confining himself not only to the real truth, but to the bare and naked truth.

He had such a horror of the overcolouring of facts of which the advocates of missions have been sometimes accused, that he did not always give to his statements the true and adequate colours of life, so that justly to estimate his work, we must often look at it rather as it was judged of by others, than as it was regarded by himself.

The sequel of the history, as regards that brief day of grace for Chang-chow, is sad and tragical. In October 13th of the same year he writes:—

"About the middle of May the native assistant, whom I have alluded to as co-operating with me here, went to Chang-chow along with another belonging to the same mission, and rented, as a place of meeting, the house of a man whom I alluded to in my May letter as having, in April, received us into his house, and taken some interest in our work. They had gone but two days when the local rebellion broke out in this neighbourhood, and had had in Chang-chow but one Sabbath's services when the insurgents reached that city. The man who had rented them his house took part with the insurgents, which led the native brethren to remove their lodgings to another place, that they might not be involved. When the insurgents had got possession of the city but two days, in consequence of their showing a disposition to rob and plunder, the populace on a sudden rose *en masse* upon them, and put nearly all who were within the city to an instant death! How little did we suppose when in April preaching the gospel in these streets, that in the course of a short month they were to be flowing with human blood! At the time of this awful massacre both the native brethren from Amoy were within the city; and as being strangers, from the same part of the country as the insurgents, they were in imminent danger of being reckoned as belonging to them, and sharing in their dreadful end. The one who is now here early saw his danger, and with difficulty made his escape, by dropping from the city walls. The other, a native of Canton province, was more fearless, being in company with some friends engaged in business in Chang-chow. He also did escape at this time, although not without much danger; but having delayed to leave the city, as his companion wished him, and return to Amoy, he was the following morning, on a sudden, arrested by a band of the populace, and, despite all his friends could do, was dragged before the mandarin, and instantly beheaded! His companion having separated from him the day before this occurred, and with great difficulty made his way home to Amoy, it was several weeks before we heard of the affecting event. Nor was this all, —the man who had rented them his house, having openly joined the insurgents, was seized in the street by the populace, and publicly beheaded! This was the melancholy end of one who, though not a man of good character among his countrymen, had a few weeks before welcomed us in our mission, joined us in all our services, and seemed to have, at least, the joy of a stony-ground hearer, if nothing more. Since that time the people of Chang-chow city have been engaged in almost constant fighting with the insurgent party; and although the insurgents have not been able again to recover the city, yet to the present hour it is so shut up, that almost no communication can be carried on between it and Amoy. The sufferings of its inhabitants have been, and still are, very great. A native of the city who had become interested in the gospel message, and who, as well as other two, came down to Amoy in April on purpose to hear it more fully, was also in great peril of being seized and put to death, like the others. His house was surrounded by armed men, and he only made his escape by getting through the roof, and running along the tops of the houses; with difficulty, after some weeks of wandering, he got here, and has remained under this roof since; it being still unsafe for him to return home."

But the fire thus kindled at Chang-chow was never wholly extinguished. Fanned by the occasional visits of other missionaries, and by the fostering care of the neighbouring native church of Chióh-bey in connection with the American Board, it still burned on with more or less of vitality and fervour through all the changes of an outwardly checkered and disastrous history. Persecution came, but only braced and purified the more the faith of the little flock. The house in which they were assembled was more than once assaulted by ruffians, the furniture broken, and the roof, door, and windows almost riddled with stones; yet the constancy of the believers remained unshaken, and the number of inquirers increased. At length "in January, 1862, Mr. Douglas visited the city in company with one of the American brethren, and had the privilege of baptizing six men, the first-fruits of this long and perilous sowing time of more than eight years, and soon after four more were baptized."[1] The last glimpse we have of Chang-chow is a singularly sad one. First taken by the Nanking rebels towards the close of 1864, and then retaken by the Imperial forces early in the next year, it suffered so terribly from the destructive violence of both, as to be reduced to a scene of utter desolation. "I remained," says one of the missionaries, who visited it soon after its recapture, "within the walls for three hours, and walked through a great part of the city. It is one mass of ruins, and I know it is within the mark for me to say that not ten houses out of a hundred are left standing. The large suburbs outside the west and south gates are entirely destroyed. There were a few persons inside attempting to clear away the rubbish; but, alas! how different from the streams and crowds of people I once had to jostle my way through! I never saw a sacked city before, and I trust I may never see another. No human being can give you an idea of the harrowing sight. Here and there we would come upon a woman sitting weeping over the ruins of what was once her home,—weeping bitterly. On asking one or two such persons some questions, we would find that husband, sons, all were gone, and she alone left to mourn the bitter loss. We entered the once famed Chang-chow with a sad heart, and left it with a sadder."

---

[1] *Narrative of the Mission to China*, &c., by D. Matheson, Esq., pp. 46, 47.

But there still linger amongst the ruins the remnants of a people whose hopes are not bound up with the wreck of their earthly homes, but who "look for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

Of date March 12th, 1853, and exactly a month before his visit to Chang-chow, I find the following brief entry in his journal, in reference to a department of work of a very different kind, but which had been occupying much of his time and thoughts for several months past:—

> "In the great mercy and by the gracious and constant aid of the Lord and Saviour I was enabled on the 10th to complete the last revised copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim* (1st part) in Chinese, which has occupied us from June 1st, 1852, until now, with the exception of a month at the end of last summer, when through feverish sickness I was obliged to lay it aside. The whole has been looked over by Messrs. Doty and A. Stronach with their teachers, and the work has been benefited by a number of their suggestions. *One hour* after finishing the last sheet in the form in which it will be printed, I received from Shanghai a copy of the *Pilgrim* in Chinese, printed two years ago by Mr. Muirhead of the London Society, chiefly for the use of pupils. It is not, however, a continuous translation of the whole."

This work was to him in a very eminent degree a labour of love. The admiration and love of early years grew upon him, as the studious care of a translator brought him into closer contact with the thoughts and more intimate sympathy with the spirit of the wondrous dreamer. It was a subject of continual interest to watch the effect of the mystic allegory on another mind, and especially on a Chinese mind. One graphic incident of this kind I remember his telling me a year or two afterwards. When occupied with the inimitable portraiture of Ignorance, the Chinese teacher, who was working with him, and who was then only half a Christian, was greatly taken with the flippant and copious talker, whose fluent tongue and knowledge of all subjects, physical and metaphysical, human and divine, positively enchanted him, and drew forth audible expressions of admiration and delight as he proceeded with his task; and it was only when the character had fully developed itself and the glittering tinsel fell off from the base metal beneath, that noisy approbation gave place to a silent thoughtfulness which showed that the master had achieved his object. He was pleased also to mark how in several instances the imagery of the dream fell singularly in with some of the familiar incidents of Chinese life, as in the inscriptions set up by the wayside to commemorate important events, and admonish wayfarers. The book has been since appropriately embellished with a series of very spirited illustrations by Mr. Adams, a Scottish artist, who has happily succeeded in adapting the incidents of the story to the characteristic physiognomy and costume of Chinese life.

Another task of a similar kind in which he was engaged about this time, was the editing of a collection of hymns for Chinese worship, which from the first became a great favourite, especially with the children, and has since appeared in improved and enlarged editions. During his visit to this country two years afterwards he used to talk with delight of the ardour with which the young and fervent converts used to recite or sing these hymns, especially a series of twelve didactic and practical rhymes composed by one of the London missionaries, and which, like the songs of the Reformation, had been much blessed in deepening in many hearts the lines of Christian doctrine and duty. One of these in particular I distinctly recal, with the very cadence of the tune to which he used to sing it to us in the characteristic style of his Chinese children in the faith:—

1.

Strait is the gate, and rough the way
That leads to heaven and endless day;
Few enter in, and very few
Their journey to the end pursue.

2.

For we with sin's desires must fight,
Mouth, ears, and eyes must guard aright,
In all we do must act by rule,
Rein in the heart nor play the fool.

3.

We must not covet sordid pelf,
Nor injure men to profit self,
Must careful be to speak the truth,
And far must flee from lusts of youth.

4.

We must not cast an envious eye
On those whose earthly place is high,
Nor look with proud and scornful thought
On those who fill the meanest lot.

5.

This heart of pride must be laid low,
We must love men, though hate they show;
Serve God, though to our worldly loss,
Believe in Christ, and bear his Cross.

6.

Alas! weak men, devoid of grace,
How can we run this holy race?
Jesus, from heaven Thy Spirit send
To guide and help us to the end![1]

---

[1] Words translated from the Chinese by W. C. Burns, and amended by Rev. J. D. Burns of Hampstead, 1855.

CHAPTER XVII.

1854.

FIRST-FRUITS.

Hitherto the abundant and patient labours which we have been recording had been rewarded only by hopeful appearances and fair promise, but the missionary was soon to witness greater things than these. On the 18th of January, 1854, Mr. Johnston, shortly after his arrival, wrote: "God has tried the faith and patience of our brethren in denying them the privilege of gathering fruit in this life as yet, and at present we cannot even speak of the blossoms and buddings of the spiritual vintage." Most singularly it happened that at the very time when these words were written events were in progress in a village not twenty miles distant which rendered them no longer true, and which may be said to have opened a new era in the history of the mission. Mr. Burns left Amoy on the 9th January on another preaching tour, taking with him as usual as his companions and assistants two native evangelists, C.-C. and T.-C. The former had been with him before in almost all his evangelistic journeys since he came to Amoy, and was a man in some respects remarkable. He had belonged in the days of his heathen darkness to the class, so numerous in China, of fortune-tellers, and possessed in large measure the fortune-teller's fluency of speech and readiness of resource. Attracted by the preaching of the gospel at the American Chapel, he had had his heart touched by the simple home question of a missionary, "Are you well? Is your heart at peace?" and sought and found the peace of God. Rejoicing in that pearl of great price himself, it was his delight henceforth to proclaim and commend it to others, and to this end he freely devoted those peculiar gifts which he had formerly employed in the pursuit of unlawful gain. He was quick, buoyant, nimble, fertile in argument, anecdote, and happy illustration, ever prompt for action, and ready with the fit word at the fitting time. The other, a schoolmaster, had been sorely puzzled to understand how the Christian preachers should spend their days telling those gospel stories to the people, without ever asking for money or apparently seeking any earthly reward. He had often enough listened at the corners of the streets to the professional story-tellers of his own country, and well remembered how adroitly they used to stop at the most thrilling part of the tale, and keep the expectant crowd in suspense until they had been well paid to tell the rest. He resolved in his heart to get to the bottom of the matter. He listened with awakened interest to the Word of Life, found out the great secret, and became a teller of the good news of grace himself.

The course of the missionary band lay first across the wide estuary which is closed in by Amoy and its companion group of islands, amid scenery which the missionaries describe as remarkably resembling the Frith of Clyde, with "its beautiful variety of hill and island and far reaches of the sea, at one moment lost sight of and again seen stretching far round promontory, creek, and bay"—then, for some eight or ten miles further along the course of a fine winding river. Their first halting-place was at a market-town on its banks of about two or three thousand inhabitants, called Pechuia (White-water Market), and the commercial centre of a considerable district, full of agricultural villages, where their course was arrested in a manner to them as unexpected as it was delightful. "Here," says Mr. Doty of the American Mission, "they intended to begin working, expecting, after a few days at longest, to go forward, making known the gospel message as they might have opportunity, and just where the Master might providentially lead them. But for two months continuously the brethren were shut up to this one place and the nearest villages, in holding forth day and night the Word of Life. Almost at the very first declaration of the truth, some persons were interested, and became earnest inquirers. From that time to the present the work has been gradually gaining in importance. Mr. Burns has rented a small building, the upper floor for his dwelling, while the lower is a preaching place. This is visited by many persons, who come in on market-days from all the surrounding region for purposes of trade. There are twelve such days in each month. Public worship is held on the Sabbath and every evening, and is attended by a goodly number of apparently interested listeners. Of a few, hope is indulged that they have really passed from death unto life. Numbers have renounced their idols. Some have burned and destroyed them. Others have given them to the brethren to be thus dealt with. Two of our native brethren are constantly employed in connection with Mr. Burns.

"In March, Mr. Burns and two brethren made a tour of some weeks further in the interior, visiting some places to which they had been earnestly invited by persons who had visited them at Pechuia. While they were absent, two other native brethren continued the labours at the first place. At this time it was my privilege to make a short visit there. I found such an awakened interest and spirit of inquiry as I had never before met with among Chinese. It did seem as if the Holy Spirit was at work. The most marked cases are of young men of some education, and endowed with considerable zeal and energy. These are very active in efforts to awaken the attention of others. From the first there have been opposers of the movement, and recently there has been manifested a disposition to annoy and disturb the public worship. There are firm idolaters there, and the spirit of persecution is not wanting."

Mr. Burns' own statement is to the same effect, though couched, as his manner was, in scrupulously guarded and naked terms, and while giving some additional details, traces briefly the further progress of the work:—

"It is exactly four months," he writes, May 8th, 1854, "since I first set out this season on a missionary tour; and you are already aware that God so remarkably opened the door in the place to which we first went, that we found it our clear duty to remain at that place as our head-quarters for a longer period than we had intended—visiting the numerous villages and market-towns within our reach, while we carried on regular services at Pechuia, our central station. The work there was so interesting that we felt it could not be abandoned, but as we were anxious to extend our efforts to one or two central positions farther inland, it was necessary that other agents should take our place in order to leave us free to go forward. Accordingly, when, two months ago, I returned from Amoy to Pechuia, an addition was made to the number of native assistants, and leaving two of these to occupy Pechuia, I proceeded on the 9th of March farther inland, in company with the two native Christian companions with whom I had originally set out on the 9th of January from Amoy. The place to which we first went is a market-town, somewhat smaller than Pechuia, named Bay-pay (Horse-flat), and distant from the former place, across the hills, about nine English miles. To this place we had been invited by several persons, and here we remained (well-lodged and free of rent) for eleven days, in the course of which we visited and preached at almost all the villages in the neighbourhood, from thirty to fifty in number. We were almost everywhere favourably received, and our message listened to with attention, although there were no cases, as at Pechuia, of persons coming out and declaring themselves on the side of the gospel. While at Bay-pay, we heard it reported that at Pechuia one family had publicly destroyed their idols and ancestral tablets (the latter the dearest objects of Chinese idolatry), and that another man had closed his shop on the Lord's-day, refusing admittance to a person who wished to trade with him. Both of these reports, so interesting to us, turned out to be true.

"From Bay-pay we proceeded four or five English miles farther on to Poolamkio (South-bank Bridge). Here we were on the sea-coast, I suppose about fifteen miles south of the entrance to Amoy harbour. We were well received here also, and would have gladly remained for a week or two, proceeding still farther south, as we were invited to do, but our books, &c., were becoming few, and our lodging—which would have been very comfortable had we had sole possession of it—being partly occupied by opium-smokers and gamblers, we resolved, after a stay of only four days, on returning to Pechuia. On arriving, we found to our delight that the work there had made decided progress in our absence. The two native Christians (members of the American Mission Church at Amoy) whom we had left in charge, seem to have been much aided in teaching the people. The preaching room had been crowded every night to a late hour by from forty to sixty persons, and those who had from the beginning shown an attachment to the truth had evidently advanced in knowledge and earnestness of spirit, and resolved to obey the gospel at the risk of much reproach and opposition. In our absence the station had also had the benefit of a short visit from Mr. Doty of the American Mission. After returning from our inland tour, we continued our meetings at Pechuia with much encouragement, several members of the native church in Amoy having successively come out of their own accord to aid in the work. During the last two or three weeks, however, the aspect of things at Pechuia has been considerably changed; for while those on the side of the gospel seem to go on in a way that fills our hearts with thankfulness, and our mouths with praise, a disposition has been shown on the part of others to interrupt our meetings, which has obliged us at night to hold them upstairs, and more privately. The state of the weather also at this rainy season has prevented us from doing so much as before among adjacent villages. When I left Pechuia last Monday, it seemed that, including young and old, there might be about twenty persons who have declared themselves on the side of the gospel, but some of these are children, and two or three are women whom we have not seen—mothers who have received the truth from their sons or husbands. Among the number of those who are attached to the gospel are two whole families of six members each. The eldest son in one of these families, a promising youth of twenty, early showed much decision, having, on the birth-day of '*the god of the furnace*,' taken his god and put it in the fire. The idol having been but in part consumed, his mother discovered among the ashes a part of its head, and father and mother together beat their son severely; but some of the other Pechuia inquirers having gone to comfort the young man, and reason with his parents, their views underwent so sudden and entire a change, that in a day or two afterwards they, with their four sons, brought out all their idols and ancestral tablets and publicly destroyed them in the view of the people. The father I have two or three times met with, and he seems, along with his four sons (an interesting set of boys), to be in a promising state of mind. The other family is that of a respectable cloth-dealer, whose shop is in the same street with our lodging. This family has passed through remarkable trials, which seem to have prepared them for receiving the gospel on its first announcement, they having twice lost all their property by robbers; and on the second of these occasions having had their house burned, to cover the robbers' retreat—when the whole family were obliged to leap from an upper story, and yet escaped unhurt! They are a very interesting family, and have in one point shown more decision than I have before seen in China, having (while yet only inquirers) shut their shop on the last eight Sabbaths, even although two of these Sabbaths were market-days. The family adjoining our house is literally divided—two against three, and three against two. The elder brother and his wife oppose,—they live by making paper images used in idolatrous processions, for burning to the dead, &c.; the mother, second son, with the youngest, who is a mere boy, are on the side of the gospel. The second son formerly made images with his elder brother, but has now given up his trade, and has begun a general business in one half of the shop which they have in common. It is curious thus to notice that on the Lord's-day the younger brother's side of the shop is closed, while the elder brother's side remains open! This young man, when we were absent farther inland, went down to Amoy with the desire of being admitted into the visible church;

and though he has not yet been baptized, the American missionaries, who examined him, were astonished and delighted by the evidence which he gave them of knowledge, repentance, and faith; and would have admitted him a month ago, along with ten others (Amoy people), had it not been that my two native companions, returning the day before to Amoy, urged the expediency of delay."

"So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." There was everywhere the stir and glad excitement of a busy harvest-field. There were all the signs of the coming of the kingdom of God after the true model of apostolic times; the general and wide-spread interest, individual decision and self-sacrifice, the division of families, the separation of brother from brother for Christ's sake and the gospel's, the test of persecution and the fierce opposition of adversaries around the wide and effectual door, the joy of first love, and the spontaneous spread of the sacred influence from village to village, and from heart to heart. Well might Mr. Burns write, in regard to these encouraging tokens, in words which mean much as coming from him:—

"What I see here makes me call to mind former days of the Lord's power in my native land. In *my own* circle of observation I have hardly seen so promising an appearance of the coming of God's kingdom since I came to China. . . . You will see from what I have stated that there is indeed much to encourage prayer and effort in behalf of this benighted people; and that we have also cause for admiring thankfulness to our covenant God and Saviour. In my own experience the Lord's goodness is so great and unceasing that while friends in Scotland may look upon me as an exile, I feel as much at home here as I would wish to do on this side of the Jordan."

The cases of some of the individual converts who were the first-fruits of this gospel harvest are briefly referred to by Mr. Burns in one of the letters just quoted; but one or two additional particulars may be given from the letters of other missionaries:—

"Of Som-a, the youngest child of the family of the cloth-merchant above referred to as having all together embraced the gospel, the following interesting incident is related. When the old father was going to Amoy as a candidate for baptism, Som-a asked to be allowed to accompany him for the same purpose. He was told he was too young, and that he might fall back if he made a profession when he was only a little boy. To this he made the touching reply, 'Jesus has promised to carry the lambs in his arms. As I am only a little boy it will be easier for Jesus to carry me.' No further words were needed; Som-a accompanied his father, and was soon afterwards baptized. Mr. Johnston, who relates this story, adds that the mother, He-Se, received all her Christian instruction from the male members of the family, as she dared not attend the public preaching; but her sons repeated to her much of what they heard, and she was the first female baptized in Pechuia.

"Another mother said she, too, wished to be a member of the religion of Jesus, because it had made such a wonderful change in her son. 'It must be a good thing,' she said, 'to be connected with such a person as Jesus.'"

It will have been noticed that the religious movement we are now describing was not confined to Pechuia, but extended more or less over the whole district, with its scattered villages, of which it forms the centre. At Bay-pay especially, the work, if less striking in its manifestations at the outset, was in the end even more steady and progressive. It became speedily the seat of a fervent and prosperous church, which has continued to this day to grow in numbers, in zeal, and in fruitfulness. Tried in a more than usual degree by the blasts of persecution, it has nobly stood the test, and proved itself to be one of those trees of God's planting, "which shaking fastens more." It was constituted into a regular Christian community almost as early as its elder sister at Pechuia, and numbered in 1865 on its communion roll more than twice as many members. It was in reference to this favoured field of labour that one of the missionaries afterwards wrote, in returning from the delightful work of instructing inquirers and examining candidates for baptism:—

"After winding about among the hills, and on emerging from a narrow rocky path, the whole rich plain in which Pechuia stands burst at once upon our view. About two months before, in returning, the labourers were just beginning to let in the irrigating waters and to break up the hardened soil; but now it was all covered with the verdure of the growing rice—a beautiful emblem of the spiritual harvest which the Lord was so rapidly gathering by our hands."[1]

Meanwhile at Amoy also the spiritual work of the missionaries grew sensibly in interest and fruitfulness. It seemed as if the mother church there had been moved to jealousy by the fervour and love of her own daughters in the faith. The earnest attention of hearers at all the chapels deepened, and inquirers multiplied. The arrival of one and another too from distant stations, who had travelled all the way in search of the priceless pearl, must have chid the tardy steps of those who had heard the divine call before them, but were halting between two opinions:

"We have great reason," writes Mr. Doty, "for thankful praise to the God of grace for the tokens of his favour that we are enjoying in our work here. Knowing there were some persons waiting an opportunity to offer themselves as applicants for church-membership, some time in January we appointed a special meeting for the purpose. We were both surprised and cheered to find about thirty persons of both sexes, and of ages varying from twenty years up to near seventy, convened. Though among this number were many whom we cannot regard as proper subjects for church-membership, yet most have manifested, and still do continue to manifest, an interest in their soul's salvation.

"We found that there was a spirit of inquiry and awakening, quite unknown to us as to its extent, among those who had been statedly hearing the word. From the time of that first meeting for conference and examination, we have felt it to be our duty to continue to hold similar services, and so to meet with those who wish instruction, or desire to be received to church-fellowship. A part of the time we have held the meeting once in two weeks, generally once a week, though in some instances twice. In these meetings we are usually engaged from three to four hours, during which time we may converse with or examine, as the case may be, three or four individuals in the most searching manner, both as to their experimental knowledge of the Holy Spirit's work in the heart, and their acquaintance with Christian doctrine. This brings us into the closest personal contact with their minds, and enables us to give instruction, to correct misconceptions of truth, guide the inquiring, encourage, warn, and exhort, so as to meet the difficulties of each individual, and the profit of all. Of those applying, after several examinations, ten were admitted to baptism on the last Sabbath of last month, March 26. Two of these are women, one aged sixty-eight years, the other forty-seven; while of the males, their ages range from twenty to sixty-four years. Our meetings continue to be attended with unabated solemnity and interest, and by increasing numbers. Among those recently baptized, as well as among those asking to be numbered among God's professing people, there are several cases manifesting more clearly the work of the Spirit with power than anything we have heretofore seen among the Chinese. Our brethren of the London Society's Mission are sharing largely in this blessed visitation. They have recently received seventeen, nine of whom were women, to church-fellowship, and numbers more are asking for the same privilege."

---

[1] Letter of Rev. Carstairs Douglas.

It was amid exhilarating influences and prospects like these that Mr. Burns made a brief visit to this country during the summer and autumn of 1854. The occasion of his journey was a sad one. His valued colleague Dr. Young had, at the close of the previous year, suffered a heavy affliction in the unexpected removal of an endeared partner, whose life had seemed alike invaluable to himself and to the cause for which he laboured; and though he seemed at first to rally from the blow, it soon appeared that he had received both in mind and body so severe a shock as to render a return to his native land for a season indispensable. It was necessary that some one should accompany him on the voyage, and it was decided after brief conference that Mr. Burns should undertake that duty. How tenderly he watched over his friend during what was to both a singularly trying journey, and how lovingly he cared for those dear to him after his early and sudden removal, it is not for me to tell; but it will be remembered in his behalf in the great day. Dr. Young died at Musselburgh on the 11th of February, 1855, having laboured only for four years in the work to which he had devoted himself; but having accomplished much in little time. He will be ever remembered with honour, as one of the first pioneers and patient sowers in a field of toil, of which he was only beginning to reap the fruit when his Master summoned him away. Many in Scotland will remember the Chinese Christian nurse who accompanied him to Edinburgh in charge of his child, and who was one of the first-fruits of his faithful labours in China. She had been baptized the previous year along with her own son and fifteen others at Amoy. "She was, we believe, the first converted Chinese woman that had been in Scotland. She could not escape observation as she sat in the church-pew, with deep thought on her countenance, poring over the Chinese hymn-book, bound in black, which she held in her dark bony hand. A red rose, after the fashion of her country, set in evergreen leaves, on the knot of her jet hair, tightly combed back, relieved the brown face almost grim with gravity. Her black peering eyes watched the preacher. The unknown tongue did not weary her. She was in the house of God and among the friends of Jesus, and longed all the week long for the Lord's-day.

When greeted by any friend at the close of the service, her face could hardly be recognized as the same. Her sparkling eye, and a look of laughter irradiated it all over. When asked if she did not weary in this country, she said to the missionary, 'Here where I can speak so little to man, I speak the more to God.' At leaving Edinburgh she said she had been happy there, but she knew it was because she loved the Saviour she had received so much kindness.

"Those who remained after the crowded meeting in St. Luke's Church, can never forget the animated dialogue carried on in Chinese between Mr. Burns and Boo-a, to whom it was very trying to appear in the great assembly, but for the willingness she felt to profess her faith in Christ before her Scottish brethren, one of whom had first carried the gospel to her family in China. Her son had already been baptized; but when her daughters were mentioned she pointed to her brow, where the water of baptism had been sprinkled, and sorrowfully shook her head. The Sabbath before her departure she sat down at the Lord's table, by her own earnest desire, and much enjoyed the ordinance. There the disciples of Jesus from the east and the west, the north and the south, can meet and understand the common language of its sacred symbols, feeding through them on the one Saviour, even while the barrier of varied tongues prevents other intercourse."[1]

In the meanwhile Mr. Burns was actively engaged in endeavouring to extend and deepen the interest in the Chinese cause, which had already begun to be felt in Scotland, and which had shortly before led to the formation of an auxiliary society in aid of the English mission. He sought especially to engage the interest of those congregations amongst whom he had chiefly laboured in former years, and who would thus most readily respond to his calls both by active efforts and by prayers. Those who then renewed their acquaintance with him were struck with the change which so short an interval of years had made upon him. The effects of a tropical climate, combined with almost incessant and exhausting labours, had sensibly told upon the vigour of a frame, which the rigours of a Canadian winter had already partially broken. The fresh, sanguine, youthful, and even boyish look, which his early hearers remembered so well, had given place to an aspect of ripe and almost fading manhood, which seemed to tell of the lapse not of six but of twenty years. His countenance was sallow, his brow furrowed, his head tinged with gray, and his eye if still bright was bright with a milder brightness. His spirit too had become riper and more mellow. Time and experience had wrought in him a gracious sweetness and human kindliness of temper, which in the young Boanerges were less conspicuous. He was more genial, more loving, more freely communicative and companionable, less restrained and austere, than in former days. There was less fire perhaps, but even more fervour; less of the Baptist—more of the Christ. It seemed as if the exalted tone of Christian devotedness which he ever sustained were now less with him a matter of effort and struggle, and more of a holy habit in which grace had become as a second nature. Comparative exile too from the household of faith, amid heathen scenes and heathen faces, made his heart warm towards his Christian brethren, and pour itself forth in fuller loving converse, as one that felt more than ever at home. "His intercourse with us in private," writes his esteemed brother-in-law, the Rev. Thomas Bain of Cupar Angus, "was of a much more genial and social character, while at the same time equally hallowed and Christ-like. He took great interest in the children, taking down all their names that he might remember them individually in prayer." His preaching too was considerably altered. The fiery intensity and somewhat spasmodic energy of former days had given place to a more full and equable flow of spiritual instruction and fervent appeal; while the frequent allusion and illustrative anecdote from the scenes of his distant field of labour, perpetually reminded the hearer that the evangelist had become the missionary. In every other way too we were reminded of this. While his bodily presence was in Scotland, it was evident that his heart and more than half his thoughts were still in China. He talked of Chinese scenes, sung Chinese hymns, recited far into the night Chinese chapters and psalms, and abounded in details of Chinese customs, traits, and ways of life, such as he too seldom indulged in in his letters. Nor was he forgotten by those whom he thus so continually remembered. Of this he received a peculiarly touching proof in a letter addressed to him as their spiritual father by the infant church at Pechuia, which in the *naïve* simplicity and freshness of its fervent and loving words breathes the very spirit of apostolic times, and which well deserves a permanent record in connection with his life and labours. The benignant look of strange delight with which, one morning in the Free Church manse at Kilsyth, he pored over this precious scroll, and deciphered and explained to us its mystic hieroglyphic lines, is to me a picture never to be forgotten. It was to the following effect:—

---

[1] *China and the Missions at Amoy*, with Notice of the Opium Trade. By George F. Barbour, Esq. Edinburgh, 1855

"Given to be inspected by Mr. Burns and all the disciples.

"We, who have received the grace of Jesus Christ, send a letter to pastor Wm. Burns, (*lit.* shepherd-teacher *Pin-ui-lim*). We wish that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ may give to all the holy disciples in the Church grace and peace. Now we wish you to know that you are to pray to God for us; for you came to our market-town, and unfolded the gracious command of God, causing us to obtain the grace of God. Now, as we have a number of things to say, we must send this communication. We wish you deeply to thank God for us, that in the intercalary seventh month and thirteenth day, pastor Johnston (*lit.* shepherd-teacher *Jin-sin*) established a free school here; there are twelve attending it. Formerly, in the third month, a man, whose name is *Chun-sim*, belonging to the village of *Chieng-choan* (pure fount village), heard you preaching in the village of *Hui-tsau* (pottery village). Many thanks to the Holy Spirit who opened his blinded heart, so that in the seventh month he sent a communication to the church at Amoy, praying the brethren to go to the village. They went and spoke for several days, and all the villagers with delighted heart listened. Also in the town of *Chióh-bey*, the Holy Spirit is powerfully working (*lit.* influencing, moving); the people generally (*lit.* man, man) desire to hear the gospel. The brethren and missionaries have gone together several times; and now, in the village of Ka-lâng, there are two men, *Ch'eng-soan* and *Sui-mui*, who are joining heart with the brethren in prayer. Teacher! we, in this place, with united heart, pray, and bitterly (*i.e.* earnestly) beg of God to give you a level plain (*i.e.* prosperous journey) to go home, and beg of God again to give you a level plain (good journey) quickly to come. Teacher! you know that our faith is thin (*i.e.* weak) and in danger. Many thanks to our Lord and God, who defends us as the apple of the eye. Teacher! from the time that we parted with you in the seventh month, we have been meditating on our Lord Jesus' love to sinners, in giving up His life for them; also thinking of your benevolence and good conduct, your faith in the Lord, and compassion for us. We have heard the gospel but a few months; our faith is not yet firm (*lit.* hard, solid). Teacher! you know that we are like sheep that have lost their shepherd, or an infant that has lost its milk. Many thanks to the Holy Spirit, our Lord, morning and evening (*i.e.* continually), comforts our hearts, [and gives us] peace. And in the seventh month, the twenty-fourth day, the brethren with united heart prayed, and shedding tears, *bitterly begged* of God again to send a number of pastors, quickly to come, again to teach the gospel. We wish that God our Father may grant this prayer, which is exactly that which the heart desires, (*i.e.* Amen.)"

Then follow nine names, being those of all the members of the church at Pechuia at the date when the letter was written. It was learned afterwards that they had subsequently addressed a similar appeal to the American missionaries, every sentence of which, Mr. Talmage writes, was prayed over. "They would write a sentence, and then pray, and then write another sentence, and then pray again." Well might an ardent friend of the cause exclaim in reference to this deeply affecting incident:—"Never did a more touching appeal come from a heathen land for ambassadors of Christ! China is thus in truth stretching out her hands to God!"

While the native Christian disciples thus spoke for themselves, the most cheering tidings also reached him from other quarters of their steadfastness and joy, as well as of the extension of the sacred influence throughout the district around.

Such good news from the far country of his adoption must have been to the missionary "as cold water to a thirsty soul," and would make him eagerly long to return to the work from which he had been so abruptly called away. He sailed again for China in the ship *Challenger* on the 9th March, along with the Rev. Carstairs Douglas, M.A., a distinguished alumnus of Glasgow University and of the New College, Edinburgh, who had devoted himself to the Chinese cause, and who was ordained by the Free Church Presbytery of Glasgow on the 21st of February, 1855.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1855—1858.

SHANGHAE, SWATOW, ETC.

Instead of resuming at once his interrupted labours in the province of Fo-kien, Mr. Burns proceeded in the first instance to the north, with the view of attempting if possible to reach the head-quarters of the Taeping rebels, then established at Nanking, and at the very crisis of their singular and mysterious career. The most contradictory rumours had prevailed with regard to the real character and probable result of that movement, and especially as to the relation of its leaders to the Christian faith; and a strong desire existed in many quarters that some of the missionaries then in China should put themselves in communication with them, with the view of at once ascertaining the real state of the case, and taking advantage of any opportunities which might present themselves for furthering the Christian cause. The difficulties in the way of such an undertaking were notoriously very great, and Mr. Burns was evidently not sanguine as to its prosperous accomplishment; but still he deemed it his duty, according to his wont, resolutely to make the attempt, and thus prove whether it were the will of God or no. The expedition proved unsuccessful; but the account he gives of it, written sometime after, is interesting, and may be appropriately here introduced, as continuing in the most authentic form the thread of our narrative:—

"I see from the *Witness* of May 8th, received to-day, that in a reference made to a letter from Amoy, it is said, 'Mr. B. preached for some days to crowds of the gay inhabitants of this city (*Soo-chow*), on his return from an attempt to reach the patriot camp at Nanking.' This statement is incorrect, as I only passed through the suburbs of the city in a boat, and this under the surveillance of mandarin officers, who did not, however, hinder the distribution of books and tracts as we passed along. As, for important reasons, I forbade at the time any account of this attempt to reach Nanking being published at Shanghae, and when writing home I purposely made the most meagre allusion to it, it is no wonder if misstatements more important than the one above quoted should be made by any one who had occasion to refer to the matter. It occurs to me that now it may not be without use to take this opportunity of giving some details regarding that journey, as it was one on which, though it failed as regards its primary object, I experienced more than usual marks of the Lord's gracious care and guidance. It was about the beginning of August, 1855, ten days after reaching Shanghae from England, that, in company with a Chinese servant from the neighbourhood of Shanghae, and who having gone with a missionary (Mr. Milne) to England, returned with Mr. Douglas and myself in the *Challenger*, I set out in a *Woo-sung* boat to try whether the way were open to reach the insurgent camp. I went in my own dress, and had resolved that unless permitted to proceed without disguise or artifice, I should return, or rather confine my efforts in making known divine truth to those whom we should meet on the way, or who should hinder us from going on to the desired destination. After proceeding rather slowly, I think for three days and a half, up the Yang-tze-Kiang, we were on a Saturday favoured with a prosperous wind, which bore us rapidly on against the stream of the river, and brought us early in the afternoon to *Tan-T'oo*, a town not far below *Chin-keang-foo*, and situated at one of the openings of the Great Canal into the *Yang-tze-Kiang*. Our getting thus far without impediment was not a little remarkable, for we had already passed two Imperial outposts, and at *Tan-T'oo* our boat was lying in the midst of a mandarin encampment. How was this, you will ask? We were just passing the head of a large island in the river, and running with a fresh breeze towards Pagoda Hill (I suppose from ten to twenty miles below *Chin-keang-foo*), when, at the mouth of a creek on the south side of the river, we met the first trace of the Imperial forces encompassing the insurgents. A number of boats were moored here, and as we approached one of them pushed off to meet us and examine what we were. I felt that now, unless God remarkably favoured us, our journey must at once come to an end, and, hid in the cabin of the boat, I prayed that the Lord would graciously interpose. The boat pushed out to meet us, waving a flag and calling us to wait and give account of ourselves; but the boatmen, no doubt alarmed, told them they had a foreigner on board, and ran on. The guard-boat, whether satisfied or not, saw that it was too late to overtake us, and, no doubt reporting that all was right, returned to their station. Shortly after this, in consequence of a bend in the river at Pagoda Hill, the boat made a tack towards the north bank, and this course I saw would directly bring us to a mandarin encampment with a guard-ship anchored in front of it. I might have told the boatman to make his course short and try to keep clear of further inquiries, but I felt this would have been a subterfuge; and so running straight on, I soon heard the cry of voices inquiring what we were, the boatmen also were calling loudly that I should come out and take the responsibility on myself. I now expected we should be boarded and detained; but coming out I found that there was no small boat near, but only a company of twenty or thirty persons looking on us from the mandarin vessel. I almost involuntarily bowed to them; they graciously returned the salutation; the boat *was put about*, and we were gone again upon our course without remark or hindrance! Our character was now of course established, by having passed successfully these outer guards, and about three P.M. we took up our place at *Tan-T'oo* without inquiry made, among the boats of the Imperial soldiers. As the day was Saturday, I resolved to spend the Sabbath at *Tan-T'oo*, and here my companion and myself (he was then considerably interested in the gospel, and is now a professing Christian and assistant-preacher in the hospital of the London Mission at Shanghae) on Saturday afternoon and the whole of Sabbath had a full opportunity of making known the truth and distributing books both among the inhabitants of the town and the mandarin soldiers, who were congregated to the number of some thousands in it. No one seemed to wonder at our visit, or to suspect that we had any design of going among the insurgents. Indeed the people were afraid to allude to the insurgent party at all. The town had been already in their hands and might soon be so again. Our boatmen, who had been prevailed on to come thus far, now obstinately refused to proceed farther. We had often reasoned with them on the subject; but, to cut the matter short, the head-man (there were three boatmen), on our getting moored at *Tan-T'oo* said, somewhat curtly, 'Now, if you want to go to Nanking, you can get out and walk.' No offer of reward would induce them to go a step further. They said it was just possible that we might get to Nanking alive; but that I, and still more they, could not hope to return. Their boat would be lost, &c.; but it was said, 'You will be remunerated.' They replied, 'Of what use will money be when we have lost our lives?' Finding them thus decided, and seeing no other way open consistently with truth and integrity, I arrived unwillingly at the conclusion that, if after the Sabbath was past, circumstances wore the same aspect, this attempt to reach the insurgents must be abandoned. I had asked the boatmen where they would propose to go in case of not proceeding farther towards Nanking. They replied, 'We will return to Shanghae by the Great Canal' (literally, as they call it, 'Transport-provision-River'). This course recommended itself as second best, if the original one must be abandoned; and so, early on Monday morning, finding the way to Nanking closed, we passed through *Tan-T'oo* into the Great Canal on our homeward route. In entering the canal we had to pass a custom-house, but a bow to the officials from our boat, coupled no doubt with the thought that if we had come too far from home, we were at any rate now turning the head homewards—this sufficed to gain us a free entrance. We now went on to the district city of *Tan-yang*, distant about twenty miles. We were examined at the custom-house as we arrived, and such a visit from a foreigner seemed to excite surprise. We were however going, as every one could see, in the right direction (Shanghae), and had come from an unsuspected quarter, *Tan-T'oo;* thus we were allowed to pass, and a present of books was received with politeness. After passing a little farther along the canal, which skirts I believe the south and east of the city, we *brought to* near the south gate, and from the boats and the population on shore were soon surrounded by a large crowd, eager to look at the foreigner (an uncommon sight in these parts), and also to get possession of the books we were distributing. At this time I had but an imperfect knowledge of the Shanghae colloquial, and that would but poorly serve here, owing to a difference of dialect. Still I could say a few things which they understood—their anxiety to comprehend no doubt quickening their apprehension. I would have got on to all appearance well in this work, but a drawback arose through the uninvited assistance of a number of *Canton* men—soldiers or followers of military officers from the south. Having some greater acquaintance with foreigners than the natives of the locality, and finding I could converse with them in their own dialect, they were too officious in their friendship to me, as well as harsh and overbearing to the crowds who pressed forward to get books. To avoid the crowd, they almost forced me on board one of their mandarin boats; but I had hardly got on board until the crowd pressed after us down the sloping bank, and by the pressure behind, those next to the water were in danger of getting a plunge. One man went down, and on seeing this I rushed on shore, and with some effort regained a position on the level ground. Perhaps it was on account of this little confusion, that when I got to our boat I found that some people had been there from the mandarin's office requesting that we should remove farther off from the city. The boatmen wished to get quite away; but after moving on to near the east gate, they consented to *bring to* there for the night. The following morning I went on shore with books, and walked along the bank of the canal by the foot of the city wall towards the south gate, where we had been the previous day. Here I was met by a kind of policeman, who asked me what my object was in coming, and said the district magistrate wished to know. Having had little previous acquaintance with Chinese mandarins, and having a good supply of books, I said that if the mandarin wished to make any inquiries about me, I would be happy to go in person with him to his office. He said this would be still better, and so we walked on, in by the gate, through streets and fields, and at last to the office. I did not see the magistrate, but great numbers of people collected, both officials and people from the town, and to them, while in waiting, I had opportunity of giving books and saying a few words in regard to the first principles of divine truth. After some delay, one or two of the magistrate's assistants came out to inspect me, and having asked through the policeman who brought me there, whether I was willing to leave their city, the same policeman conducted me through the city by another route to the east gate, and so back to our boat. It seemed for the moment that the matter was ended, and that we had nothing to do but to go on our way peaceably; but after a short time the original policeman and one or two more came and asked my companion (he had not been with me in the city, I was alone) to go on shore as they wanted to speak to him. He was about to go, when I became alarmed, and said to them that if any one was to be beaten (signing to that effect) it was I and not he, and that if he went I must go also. They said there was no fear of that, and that if I went also it would be better. I got some books and we went ashore outside the east gate. In a small hall we found an assistant magistrate seated in full dress waiting for us. We were called to sit together at his left hand, the place of honour, and he proceeded to ask at my companion about me and our objects in coming. In answer to the inquiry who I was, we put down in writing that I was a disciple of Jesus and a publisher of [His] religion. He saw I was a foreigner, but never thought of asking to what particular country I belonged, and in writing we did not think of making reference to this.[1] He said with Chinese politeness, that as on the way to Shanghae people might give us trouble, an escort would be sent with us! and that they would very soon be ready to set out. I expressed the hope that they would not prevent us from distributing our books. He said that full liberty would be given us to do this. We then returned to our boat, the original policeman and another remaining on board to see that we did not get out of sight. We should have remained here until our escort was ready, but the poor people were so clamorous for books that the ire of the old policeman was aroused, and at last, when all other means failed, he ordered the boatman to move on for about a mile or so from the city. All the way we were followed on the banks by earnest applicants for books, and it was truly amusing to see the policeman at one time chiding and remonstrating with the people for thus following us, and then once or twice when his eye fell on an acquaintance among the applicants, his zeal for his office was forgotten, and he came in to get from us *a large book for his friend!* At last when we had got to a considerable distance from the city, the evening was falling, and as we had neither wine nor opium for the policeman, he thought of going back to the city, got his arms full of books for his friends and left us. Poor man! he had not gone far, we were told, until the people mobbed him and took his books from him. The sight of this poor people, so eager to get our books, but alas! so little able to understand them, was fitted to affect the heart. May the day soon come when the Christian teacher shall have liberty to go and make known to them fully the love of God in the gift of His Son for sinners, and the power of the blood of Jesus to cleanse from all sin. After the policeman left us we had still many applicants for books; our boatmen moved on, and in their eagerness to gain their object, several from time to time went into the water and swam to our boat (a distance of only a yard or two). But how could you give a book to a man who had to swim with it on shore? the book, one would think, must get wet. But nay, the Chinese are in many things singular; here was a new expedient. The swimmer got his book, placed it on his brow, made it firm there by his tail tied round his head, and swam to the bank! As it was becoming dark we reached a market-town extending for some distance on both sides of the canal, and here no sooner had we arrived than our coming became known (I know not how), and from that moment onward until our stock of books was more than two-thirds exhausted, we were beset by crowds of applicants, and among them a larger number than usual of respectable people, and even several Buddhist priests. It was well nigh midnight when our escort—two retainers of the mandarin's office—made up to us here in their boat. They seemed alarmed lest we should have got beyond their reach, and were proportionably glad to find us here quietly waiting them. We were glad also that our book distribution had advanced so rapidly during the short respite allowed us. Our escort were intelligent men, and conversed with us at length in our boat before going to rest in their own. Next day we moved on to the *inferior department* city of *C'hang-chow*, where our escort was changed, those from *Tan-yang* returning home, and two from *C'hang-chow* accompanying us to the next city, viz. the *district* city of *Woo-seih*, like *C'hang-chow* situated on the banks of the Great Canal. Here again our conductors gave place to others, or rather, I think, to *one* only, who the following day accompanied us to the famed city of *Soo-chow*, the allusion to which in the newspaper you have sent me has given occasion for this unusually long narrative. The stage from *Woo-seih* to *Soo-chow* was rather longer than usual, and the afternoon was so advanced when we reached one of the principal city gates, that our escort was just in time to get in before the gate was shut. In the former times of China's peace, and *Soo-chow's* famed grandeur, the gates would not shut so early as now, when the sound of rebellion is heard so near as at *Nanking* and *Chin-keang*. It was in passing through a long suburb on our way to the city gate that we had an opportunity of witnessing, in the many gaily decorated pleasure-boats we passed, evidence at once of the wealth and the moral pollution of this famed city. It was during this transit, too, that in this crowded street of 'Vanity Fair' we distributed the word of life in the form of tracts and copies of the Scripture. Our escort, on this occasion an old man, not so lettered as some of his predecessors, was most diligent in this work, aiding us in it as if for this alone he had been sent. Some came in boats to get books, and some reached out with bamboo basket-hooks from their doors and windows opening to the canal. (These basket-hooks they use for picking up things from the water.) This, alas! was all that we were able to do at *Soo-chow;* others have been able to make a somewhat longer stay, and to do more, and the time is coming fast, we trust, when *Soo-chow*, like Corinth, will receive the gospel, and many of its people exchange their luxuries for higher and more enduring pleasures, being 'washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'"

---

[1] I always told I was an Englishman.

For the next six months he continued to make his headquarters at Shanghae, from which as a centre he made frequent and extensive excursions amongst the towns and villages around. Living for the most part in his boat, and following leisurely the course of the canals and rivers which here spread like a net-work over the whole face of the country, he scattered far and near the precious seed over a rich and fertile region, which, with the contiguous plain of Ningpo to the south, may be well described as the very garden of China. Stretching out in an unbroken expanse for twenty or thirty miles from the sea-board to the hills, "one vast rice-field," dotted over with towns and villages, and with dark clumps of mulberry-trees—with the white or brown sails of innumerable river craft everywhere in sight moving over the tranquil land—it is rapturously described by travellers, particularly by Mr. Fortune, as the very picture of smiling plenty, teeming population, and peaceful industry.

Had the traveller stood there two months after, one of the white sails he saw might have been that of the devoted missionary unweariedly pursuing his sacred calling, amid the crowds of other voyagers "running to and fro" along those shining pathways on other errands. But his eye rested not upon the opulent beauty of the land, but upon the homes of its people, over whom his heart yearned, as he saw them wholly given to the cares of the present life, or to vain idolatrous rites which blindly pointed to another. "Remember me," says he, "from this place, in the midst of a people of a strange tongue, and yet as if at home, to all who love the Lord Jesus and seek the coming of his kingdom and the gathering in of his elect ones in China. O let such pray for us! Ye that make mention of the Lord *keep not* silence, and give Him no rest until He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the whole earth."

The following extracts will give a still more distinct idea of the nature of his labours at this time:—

"*Shanghae, December* 13*th*, 1855.—I write these lines on board a river-boat, which has been my principal habitation during the past three months, and in which I returned to this place on Monday last, after an absence in the surrounding country of twenty-six days. The last place we visited was a market-town, Min-hang, about halfway between Sing-kiang and Shanghae, and here we were prepared to meet with less attention than usual, as the place is often trodden by foreign feet, and there are few among the missionaries, I suppose, who have not been there. However, in this case our fears were disappointed and our hopes much more than exceeded, for during the Saturday and Sabbath which we spent at this place, we had usually large and attentive audiences, and on the Sabbath evening, when it was getting dark, we still continued to preach to an engaged audience, with whom at the close I felt at liberty to join in public prayer to the living and true God in the name of Jesus. It is not generally our custom thus to pray with the people, preaching as we do in the public street, &c., and alas! too frequently to a people not prepared to join in spirit with us."

Now and then the peculiarity of the circumstances would impart a certain tinge of romance to the scene. That strange sermon, for instance, under cloud of night, in a lone inland village, by the light of lanterns, suggests a picture singularly vivid and striking:—

"When it was dark we halted for the night at Chung-too-keaon (or Passage-for-all-Bridge), where there are but a few houses, and where we little thought of finding a congregation. However, we had hardly halted before we were arrested by the sound of a multitude of voices as of a crowd dispersing, and were informed that there had been a stage-play going on of an unusually immoral kind, and that the people had now dispersed, so that it was too late to reach them. However, we went ashore, and although the mass of these poor heathens were gone, we still found as many as we could address with effect, lingering about the gambling and eating house. The people had their lanterns and we had ours, and, amid the darkness thus broken, we addressed a multitude of precious souls, assisted graciously by our God to speak with more than usual earnestness and liberty of speech; the people also, as if panic-struck by being overtaken by such a message in such circumstances, listened with a fixed and serious interest. I called on them to join with us in prayer to the true God, in the name of the Saviour of sinners, that he would deliver them from their sins, and save them from the punishment which sin was preparing for them. At the beginning of the address to God's throne there was some noise of voices, but towards the close all was breathless stillness. My companion and I were encouraged by thus meeting, as if by God's special guidance, with opportunities of declaring his truth and calling fellow-sinners to repentance."

But a field already occupied by so many missionaries, and so "often trodden by foreign feet," could scarcely be an altogether congenial sphere of operations to one who felt himself especially called to the work of an evangelistic pioneer. Accordingly, within less than two months from the date of the lines just quoted, he was again on his way to another and distant part of the country. A Christian friend, Captain Bowers, of the merchant ship the *Geelong*, had spoken in high terms of Swatow, a rising commercial mart at the eastern extremity of the Canton province, and the chief port of the department of Tie-chew, as an advantageous centre for missionary operations; and being himself about to sail thither, offered him a free passage should he be disposed to go and reconnoitre the ground. An invitation coming to him in this unsought and apparently providential way, and reaching him too at a time when no special attachment bound him to any other sphere, and when he was as it were waiting for a summons to some new service from the Master, came to him with all the force of a divine call; and he resolved, after brief but prayerful consideration, to close with it. It is probable also that he was on other grounds not indisposed to turn his face once more towards the Canton district, where seven years before he had begun his evangelistic labours in China, and which he had been compelled reluctantly to leave, without having made such full proof of his ministry as he had hoped and desired. He sailed from Shanghae early in March, and reached Swatow about the middle of that month. His next date is from that place, March 31, 1856:—

"*Swatow, March* 31*st*, 1856.—When I last wrote to you I was on the point of leaving Shanghae for this place in company with Mr. Taylor of the Chinese Evangelization Society. We left on the 6th of March, and, after a favourable passage of six days, arrived here on the 12th. We were very averse to the thought of being located even temporarily on the island (Double Island), on which some of our countrymen have, by compact with the local magistrates, taken up their head-quarters, but were anxious, if possible, to find a location in the Chinese town of Swatow, which is on a promontory of the mainland, five English miles further up, at the mouth of the river Han. We were apprehensive lest we should not be permitted thus to locate ourselves; but in the gracious and all-governing providence of our God and Saviour, we found favour and assistance from those whom we least expected to aid us, viz. the Canton merchants here, who are the agents or correspondents of the foreigners (our countrymen) down the river; and two days after our arrival we were, to our own surprise and joy, enabled to take possession of the lodging which we have since been occupying unmolested. Our lodging is not indeed large, being only a small upper flat of a house occupied below as a shop; but it is sufficient for our present wants, and we are the more thankful for it as of vacant houses here there are almost none. Swatow is not a very large place, but it is growing at present very rapidly, and has all the appearance of being in a few years a place of great importance. During the first ten days after our arrival, the *Geelong* lay at anchor along with another ship off the town discharging cargo, and Captain Bowers continued to show us the same Christian kindness which he had manifested in bringing us here free of charge. Mr. Taylor and myself came here quite undecided whether we should be able to attempt more than simply to make a running visit for the purpose of Scripture and tract distribution to the open parts of the country; but now that we see more fully the importance of this region as a vast and unoccupied scene for missionary labour, we are anxious, before going further, to prepare ourselves for the purpose of teaching the people orally by acquiring some knowledge of their dialect. This is a comparatively easy work in my case, the dialect spoken here being, as I formerly mentioned, very similar to that spoken at Amoy. We have as yet done very little in the way of active labour among this people, but would pray that our zeal may increase with our ability to improve the openings for usefulness that may be afforded us. We have much need, as every one must see who considers our present position, of special grace to support and render us useful. For this grace may many be led to pray, that for the gift bestowed on us by the means of many persons, thanks may be afterwards given by many in our behalf, should it please the God of grace to preserve us in his truth and love, and make us a means of blessing to some of these dying millions."

While the aspect of the field in a moral and spiritual point of view was at first by no means encouraging, the representations given to him of its great importance had not been exaggerated. Situated on a narrow channel connecting two wide and spacious basins, the one running into the land and the other opening out to the sea, Swatow possesses all the advantages of a convenient and commodious commercial centre. Behind it is an extensive, opulent, and densely peopled district, for whose produce and enterprise it affords a natural outlet; while before it lies the direct and open pathway to all the commerce of the world. At about five miles' distance, near the entrance of the outer harbour, is the subordinate port and foreign station of Double Island, affording a convenient anchorage for vessels approaching either from the north or from the south. As a commercial mart it is only of recent formation, but has been rapidly growing in wealth and importance, and was two years after this advanced to a new position, by being placed by treaty amongst the number of the ports legally open to foreign residence and foreign traffic. It is, far more than even Hong-Kong or Canton, the true key to the whole district south of Amoy, from which it is distant along the coast-line about 150 miles.

The prospect, however, of a prosperous entrance into this new and untried field did not at first on further trial become more promising. Three months after, Mr. Burns was as it were still endeavouring in vain to effect a landing on what seemed an iron-bound and inhospitable shore.

"*At Nan-yang, ten miles from Swatow, July 16th*, 1856.—During the last fortnight I have been moving from place to place, making known the gospel message and distributing tracts, &c., in company with two professing Christians, natives of this district, who came up from Hong-Kong fully a month ago, sent by Mr. Johnson, an American missionary, to co-operate with us. Previously to their coming, I had been out on a missionary tour accompanied by a servant only. . . Had we obtained a place suitable for indoor preaching at Swatow, I would not have ventured at this hot season to go about in the country. Difficulties, however, have been thrown in the way of our obtaining such a place, and so no other course has been left open but the one we are now following. We have met as yet with but little decided encouragement, but still something is done to spread an incipient knowledge of the truth, and in a field which has been so little cultivated we must not be discouraged if we meet not with immediate success."

Still as ever his eyes were unto the Lord, the salvation of Israel, as his one source of strength and hope of victory. Great indeed and heavy was the stone that closed the sepulchre in which slept this heathen people; but he went forth in the strength of One who by one touch of His hand could roll it away:—

"I need perhaps as much as ever I did since I came to China the presence and power of God's quickening Spirit, to maintain divine love and compassion for souls in my heart. Are there those who feel for us in this unbroken field of heathenism, and cry to God with spiritual agonizings for the descent of the Spirit in his life-giving and converting power? The God of grace grant to us such helpers, for the glory of his own great name!"

He was every day painfully reminded of the urgent need of such help, and of the utter vanity of any other. Well might he, in contemplating the case of that blinded, debased, and almost savage people, have adopted the cry of Valignano, in looking across to that rock-bound coast, "O rock, rock, when wilt thou open?"

To the other difficulties of this arduous and trying service, "perils of robbers" were, as on many former occasions, added. In a postscript to one of the letters just quoted, he writes:—"About two o'clock A.M., or past midnight, July 18th, 1856. We have just been visited by robbers, who have taken all but the clothes we wear, without however doing us any injury. This is a new call to pity, and to pray for this poor people, sunk so low in darkness and sin. One of our number, it is proposed, shall return to Swatow to get a small supply of money and books, while the other Christian and I go on to another town to await his return. We are preserved in much peace, and have just been joining in praise and prayer for this poor people."

A momentary gleam of light seemed now to break upon them in the unexpected kindness and cordiality of the people in some of the villages which they visited; but the sky was soon again overcast, and a train of events followed which might well have issued in a sad and tragical conclusion. The history will be best told in his own words, in a letter bearing the unexpected date of "Canton, Oct. 10, 1856:"—

"*Canton, October 10th*, 1856.—MY DEAR SIR,—When I last wrote you in the middle of July, I and my companions had just been robbed in our lodgings at a village about sixteen miles from Swatow. The following day one of my companions returned to Swatow with my letters, and to obtain a fresh supply of books and money, while my other Christian companion and I went forward, as we had intended, to the town of Tang-leng, about six miles further on. We were without money, but God provided support for us in a way that was new to me. The people who took our books gladly contributed small sums of cash for our support, and the first day we thus collected enough to keep us for two days; a countryman also, going the same road, volunteered to carry our bag of books for us; it was heavy for our shoulders, but easy for his, and he said he would want no money, but only a book. Thus the Lord helped us in going forward on his work, instead of turning back to Swatow for help. At Tang-leng we were very well received. In the neighbourhood there are two native Christians, converted in connection with the American Baptist Mission in Siam, and who, though they are left much to themselves, seem to follow the Lord in sincerity. With these we had much pleasure in meeting on the Lord's-day, and at other times. A heavy and continued fall of rain detained us at Tang-leng for some weeks, without our being able to do much abroad; and at last, on Monday, August 18th, we left this town, intending to return to Swatow. Our course by water leading us to within five or six miles of the *Chaou-chow-foo* (chief city of the Chaou-chow department), we agreed to pay it a visit; but fearing lest we should give offence to the authorities, we determined, instead of living on shore, to make the boat which conveyed us there our head-quarters while we remained. On Tuesday the 19th we went on shore, and were particularly well received by the people. The demand for our books among persons able to read them, was unusually great. In the meantime, however, an alarming report of the presence of a foreigner outside the city having been carried to the authorities, we were in the evening suddenly arrested in our boat, and, with all our books, &c., taken prisoners into the city. The same night we were examined publicly by the district magistrate, and after the interval of a day we were examined anew by a deputy (I suppose) of *Che-foo*, or chief magistrate of the department. On these occasions my companions and myself had valuable opportunities of making known something of the gospel, and of the character and objects of Christ's disciples in China; and as there was a great demand for our books, the work of many days seemed to be crowded into one or two. The magistrates examined us with great mildness and deliberation, seeming anxious to obtain information rather than to find fault; and on the evening of the 21st, the day of our second examination, a sub-official was deputed to inform us that the magistrates found we had been arrested on a false report, and that if the Canton merchants at Swatow, or any one of them, would stand security for us, we would be allowed to return to that place. The Canton merchants (through whom the trade in foreign vessels is carried on at Swatow), on being written to, came forward in the kindest manner with the document required; but in the meantime, it appears, the magistrates had reflected that, having once arrested a foreigner, confined and examined him, they could not, according to law or with safety to themselves, give him up to any other than a foreign consul, and so I was told that I would be sent to Canton. On Saturday the 30th I was put on board a river-boat, and carried about a mile above the city. Here we remained until Tuesday morning, when, being joined by a number of officials, high and low, in all occupying four river-boats, and going to Canton, some in connection with my case, and some on other business, we at last commenced our journey. I was provided with a servant, and with whatever food I wished, at the expense of the government; and had I been well, and had had with me a good supply of Christian books, I might have enjoyed the journey much. As the case was, my books were nearly all gone; and as to my health, a slight cold which I had caught before coming to the city had, through excitement, &c., taken the form of an intermittent fever, with chills (ague), which, violent at first, continued more or less during all my journey. Our course lay first up the Chaou-chow river against a rapid stream, through Ken-ying-chow, and then, when the river ceased to be navigable, we crossed the country through a hill-pass—a distance of about twenty miles—to where another river, flowing down through Heong-chow to Canton, becomes navigable for boats of considerable size. The first part of the journey was tedious, and (including days on which we halted until our business at the various cities we passed was concluded) we were on the way in all thirty-one days. The news of our arrest, and of my being sent to Canton, had reached Hong-Kong, and through the great kindness of many friends who felt anxious for my safety, and could not explain why we should be so long on the way, inquiries were made for us at the office of the native authorities in Canton. It was perhaps owing to this in part, that on reaching Canton on the morning of September 30th, instead of being taken to the mandarin's office, two men were sent by the authorities to conduct me straight from the boat to the office of the British consul. The consul has had a communication from the governor-general about the case. I did not see it, but the consul informed me that it was conceived in a mild strain, much more so than he had expected; and I am thus wonderfully preserved, and freed from the infliction of any punishment or penalty. I am sorry to add that there is reason to fear my two companions are still confined at Chaou-chow-foo, though the governor-general assures the consul they have been sent to their native districts (in the Chaou-chow department), to be liberated on finding proper security. . . . Looking at the lenient view of our case which the native authorities both at Chaou-chow and here seemed led to take, I was disposed, now that my health is graciously restored, to proceed very soon back to Swatow, in the hope of being able to prosecute the missionary work there unmolested; but yesterday, when in the act of making arrangements for going to Hong-Kong, I was met by a message from the British plenipotentiary, conveyed to me by the consul, to the effect that, 'after the representations of the imperial commissioner, he should deem it imprudent and improper that I should return to the district from which I have been sent.' Met by such a message, from such a quarter, I think it will be my duty to delay making any movement of the kind I contemplated, at least until I hear from Mr. Taylor about his plans and prospects, and until the native brethren, as we hope they soon may, be released. . . . In the meantime, if shut up for a season at Canton, I am in the midst of kind missionary brethren, American and English; and my acquaintance with the Canton dialect, now revived, should save me, through the grace of God, from spending my time unprofitably. The field is the world, the seed is the Word of God. Most of those who came down with me from Chaou-chow were Canton men; they treated me with much respect and kindness, and with them, in the course of the month we spent together, I had many conversations on the subject of the gospel, which I trust may not prove altogether useless. Looking back on the whole scene through which I have passed, and contrasting the life and favour granted us with the misconstruction and suffering to which we might have been subjected, I cannot but adore the wonderful goodness and power of Him to whom the kingdom belongs, and who unceasingly cares even for the most unworthy of his servants. While the people of God have need to pray for us that we may be guided to act aright, and not to rush into danger without cause, they have surely cause to give praise for deliverance vouchsafed, and for opportunities, such as seldom occur, of making known something of the truth of the gospel to men in authority, and to many others. . . . With Christian regards to all friends, I am, ever yours,—WM. C. BURNS."

There fortunately exists also a Chinese account of these events, which is so curiously characteristic, that I am tempted here to reproduce it as a supplement to the missionary's own narrative. It is contained in the official statement addressed by Commissioner Yeh to the British consul Mr. Parkes in delivering up his prisoner to him, and gives us a vivid glimpse into the interior economy and life of that singular people.

"COMMISSIONER YEH TO CONSUL PARKES.

"*Translation.*

"Yeh, High Imperial Commissioner, Governor-General of the Two Kwang Provinces, &c., addresses this declaration to H. S. Parkes, Esq., Her Britannic Majesty's Consul at Canton.

"I have before me an official report from Wang-Ching, Chief Magistrate of the district of Hae-yang, in the department of Chaou-chow, which contains the following statements:—

"It being the duty of your subordinate to act with Le-seuenfang, the major commanding at this city (Chaou-chow), in the inspection of the defences of the place, we suddenly observed, whilst engaged in this service, three persons seated in a boat on the river whose appearance had something in it that was unusual. We found in their boat, and took possession of, seven volumes of foreign books, and three sheet tracts; but these were the only things they had with them. On examining the men themselves, we observed that they all of them had shaven heads, and wore their hair plaited in a queue, and were dressed in Chinese costume. The face of one of them, however, had rather a strange look; his speech in respect to tone and mode of expression being not very similar to that of the Chinese. We, therefore, interrogated him carefully, whereupon he stated to us that his true name was Pin-wei-lin (William Burns); that he was an Englishman, aged 42 years, and, as a teacher of the religion of Jesus, had been for some time past engaged in exhorting his fellow-men to do good deeds. In 1847 he left his native land and travelled to China, and took up his residence first at Victoria, where he lived two years, and afterwards in the foreign factories at Canton, where he remained for more than one. Subsequently, he visited Shanghae, Amoy, and other places, and there spent several years; wherever he went he made himself acquainted with the languages of the Chinese, and by this means he delivered his exhortations to the people, and explained to them the books of Jesus, but without receiving from any one the least remuneration. In 1854 he embarked in a steamer from Amoy, on a visit to his native home, and in December, 1855, joined himself to one of his countrymen, surnamed Tae, who was going to Shanghae to trade. 'I accompanied him thither,' said Burns, 'in his vessel; but from Shanghae Tae returned home again, whilst I remained there and engaged myself in the distribution of Christian books. In the sixth month of the present year (July), I left Shanghae, and took passage in a foreign sailing vessel to Shantow (Swatow), in the district of Chinghae. There I fell in on the 12th day of the 7th month (August 12) with Le-a-yuen and Chin-a-seun, the two Chinese who have now been seized with me. I called upon them to be my guides, and we proceeded in company to Yen-fan, and from thence came on to this city, where we had it in contemplation to distribute some of our books. Scarcely, however, had we arrived at the river's bank on the 19th day of the 7th month (19th August), when to our surprise we found ourselves under surveillance, and deprived of our liberty. We entertained, however, no other views or intentions than those which we have stated, and declare that these statements are strictly true.'

"Such is the account given by the missionary, William Burns, who, together with his seven volumes of foreign books and his three sheet tracts, was given over into the charge of an officer, and brought in custody to this office.

"Having examined the above report, I (the imperial commissioner) have to observe thereon that the inland river of the city of Chaou-chow is not one of the ports open to (foreign) commerce; and it has never on that account been frequented by foreigners. I cannot but look upon it, therefore, as exceedingly improper that William Burns (admitting him to be an Englishman) should change his own dress, shave his head, and assuming the costume of the Chinese, penetrate into the interior in so irregular a manner. And although, when closely examined by the magistrate, he firmly maintained that religious teaching and the distribution of books formed his sole object and occupation, it may certainly be asked, why does William Burns leave Shanghae and come to Chaou-chow, just at a time when Kiang-nan and the other provinces are the scene of hostilities? Or, can it be that a person, dressed in the garb and speaking the language of China, is really an Englishman, or may he not be falsely assuming that character to further some mischievous ends?

"I have directed Heu, the assistant Nan-hae magistrate, to hand him over to the consul of the said nation, in order that he may ascertain the truth respecting him, and keep him under restraint; and I hereby, by means of this declaration, make known to him (the consul) the above particulars.

"William Burns, seven volumes of foreign books, and three sheet tracts, accompany this declaration.

"*Heenfung*, 6*th year*, 9*th month*, 2*d day*. (September 30, 1856.)"

Another characteristic incident related by his friend and fellow-labourer, Dr. De la Porte, may be here introduced, as completing the history of these deeply interesting events:—

> "When he was arrested in August, 1856, and brought before the chief magistrate of the Chaou-chow department, the magistrate required him to go down on both knees to be examined, as is the practice in China. Mr. B. very firmly but respectfully refused, saying that he would go down on one knee, as he would do to his sovereign, Queen Victoria; but that he would only go down on both knees to the King of kings. The magistrate was struck by this answer, solemnly and respectfully uttered, and allowed the missionary to be examined on one knee."

There were several circumstances connected with the time and position of affairs in which these events took place which rendered them peculiarly critical, and which led him ever after to regard their peaceful issue as a remarkable instance of the Lord's gracious leading and providential care. His arrest and confinement took place immediately on the eve of the hostilities which that year broke out between the British and Chinese powers, and just before the commencement of those sanguinary proceedings on the part of Commissioner Yeh, which sent a thrill of horror throughout the civilized world. Had he arrived at Canton while these events were in progress, it is not difficult to see what the swift and terrible issue would have been! It will be remembered, too, that he had been, shortly before his arrival in this province, actually on his way to the head-quarters of the rebel army, on an unknown errand, to which the habitual jealousy of the Chinese authorities might easily have ascribed a sinister purpose. Alive to the danger of such misconstruction he had refrained at the time from giving even to his friends any account of that journey, which might afterwards find its way into the Shanghae papers, and thus lead to possible complications and interruption of his work, and it remained in consequence up to this hour totally unknown to the Chinese authorities. Had it been otherwise, and had any written trace of the journey and the inquiries connected with it existed on the records of any Chinese court, it would have been infallibly brought to light in connection with the inquiries consequent on the present arrest, and lent strong colour to the suspicion which his Chinese garb, coupled with his foreign look and accent, seemed to have awakened.

"Had an account of the journey," he wrote afterwards (June 28th, 1858), "been published at the time in the Shanghae newspaper, as would probably have been the case had it not been interdicted, it is quite possible that the Chinese authorities in this quarter might have got some hint of the circumstance, when two years ago I was detained with two companions at the Foo city (Chaou-chow). It would in that case have seemed to them evident that I was a rebel in disguise, and the result can be but little doubtful. As the case stood, our countrymen in this neighbourhood knowing nothing of the said journey, none of the Chinese in their employ could even have it in their power to cast suspicion on us. I thought it also a special mercy that in neither of the examinations by the authorities at the Foo city was a single allusion made to the rebel party, nor any entangling questions put as to where I went and with what objects when journeying in the neighbourhood of Shanghae. Had such questions been put, then I might have seemed to be self-convicted of abetting the rebellion, and so have been summarily dealt with as an enemy of the government. The possibility of this was painted in painful colours to my mind when suffering from fever in my confinement, but from all these fears and dangers the Lord wonderfully delivered me. It would have been indeed a different thing to suffer as a supposed rebel, and to suffer 'as a Christian.' This latter privilege was given to my native companions when beaten on the face and imprisoned for months; from the former I was most graciously and completely saved."

Notwithstanding Dr. Bowring's friendly advice he was induced soon afterwards to return to Swatow, with the view especially of inquiring after his native brethren who were still in captivity at the Foo city. It was painful to him to find on his arrival there that they had been treated by the authorities with a cruel severity which they had not dared to use towards a British subject; but at the same time he rejoiced greatly that they had been enabled to witness a good confession in behalf of Christ in the presence of their heathen adversaries. Beaten forty blows on the cheek with an instrument resembling the sole of a shoe, they adhered unflinchingly to their testimony to the truth and preciousness of the gospel, as the one only remedy for the ills of the soul, and returned to their prison only to pray and sing praises to God, and to labour daily for the salvation of their fellow-captives, one of whom, to their great joy, was in due time given them for their hire. At length, after four months' imprisonment, they were, at Mr. Burns' intercession, set at liberty.

Meanwhile he had received at Swatow an unexpectedly cordial welcome from those to whom he had before preached, "enjoying favour in the sight of rich and poor, the rulers and the ruled." He was enabled at last to effect a permanent settlement in the place, and to resume his interrupted labours under more favourable auspices, and with brighter prospects of success. Having engaged the valuable co-operation of a medical man of the Wesleyan denomination, Dr. De la Porte, then practising amongst the foreign shipping at Double Island, he was enabled to combine the beneficent ministries of a medical mission with his usual evangelistic operations, and thus more rapidly win his way to the confidence and regard of the native community. Two days of each week were regularly employed in connection with this work, when he acted as interpreter between the physician, as yet imperfectly acquainted with the language, and the patients, as they came one by one to tell their case, while two native evangelists were engaged in another room, ministering the word of spiritual healing to the crowd of impotent folk who were waiting their time to be heard. About forty or fifty sufferers would thus be prescribed for in one day, while, at the same time, unnumbered seeds of saving truth were cast in faith upon the waters, to be found, it may be, after many days.

In this way the preaching of the word, on week-days and on Sabbath-days, both to the foreign visitors and to the native community, went on steadily and in perfect peace, notwithstanding the rumours of war between the Chinese and British powers then raging in their immediate neighbourhood. It seemed to him as if the passing events of that stirring drama were far better known, and excited a far livelier interest, amongst his friends at home than amongst those living within a hundred miles of the scene of action; and from first to last, the friendly relation in which he stood both to the authorities and to the people around him remained undisturbed.

"A week or two ago," he writes, Jan. 30, 1857, "the principal local authority in this place, when sick, invited Dr. De la Porte's medical assistance, and was very grateful for the aid thus given him; and we are on such friendly terms with the authorities here, that it was in the small fort in the town, and from the military officer in charge of it, that we the other day got the news of the progress of the war, which had just come by steamer from Hong-Kong. He passed as we were speaking to the people near the fort, listened with some interest, and then invited us to take tea and converse with him, not only about the quarrel at Canton with the English, but about the gospel of Christ."

Only by two incidents was he brought into closer and more personal contact with the political events then passing around him. The one was a proposal made to him in a very gratifying way by Lord Panmure, that he should undertake the office of chaplain to the British forces in that quarter, with the usual rank and salary of a major in the army. He respectfully but decidedly declined the appointment, chiefly on the ground that his connection with the invading army would be ever afterwards remembered by the Chinese, and thus leave upon him, as it were, an indelible stamp, most prejudicial to the success of the higher ministry to which he had devoted his life. Lord Panmure entirely appreciated the high motives by which he had been actuated, and replied in terms of Christian courtesy, which must have been most gratifying to him.

The other incident was the arrival of Lord Elgin at the port of Swatow, in the course of his important mission to the court of Peking, and is thus briefly alluded to by Mr. Burns:—

> "Lord Elgin in his way to the north called in at Swatow, about a month ago. I was invited to breakfast with him, on board H.M. steamship *Furious*, and had a full opportunity of expressing to him my convictions and feelings on various points—the coolie trade, opium, &c. He made particular inquiries in regard to the progress of the missionary work among this people, and also heard in detail the facts connected with my arrest, &c., in 1856."

He ever afterwards retained the deepest respect for that distinguished and esteemed nobleman, who afterwards, when Governor-general of India, corresponded with him in the kindliest manner, in regard to a matter in which he had occasion to ask his friendly intervention. It was no doubt in great measure in consequence of this visit, and the observations and inquiries then made, that we owe the fact that Swatow was, by the treaties then under consideration, added to the number of the free and open ports. The following extracts from a letter to one of his sisters furnishes an additional reason for his prudent declinature of the chaplaincy, and gives at the same time one or two interesting glimpses of his occupations and mode of life at this time:—

"*Swatow, February 22d*, 1858.—MY DEAR SISTER,— . . . During the past few weeks I have been almost constantly resident, not at the Chinese town of Swatow (my proper station), but at Dr. De la Porte's (Double Island). I came down at first for a change of air, but after getting the full benefit of this I am still for a little detained here by superintending some repairs and improvements in the Dr.'s house. I need to attend to this rather than he, not only because I understand the language, but because, in the view of his going to England, I consented to take his cottage, &c., from him, wishing to hold the situation in behalf of the mission cause generally as well as for present use. We have the workmen about us, and have some of them always with us at evening worship. Among other things we are at present engaged, like the patriarchs, in digging a well, and as the position is rather elevated, we need to go deep in order to find 'springing water' such as Isaac found, Gen. xxvi. 19. You allude to the invitation given me to become chaplain to the Presbyterian soldiers in China. I have lately had a very kind acknowledgment from the War Office of my letter declining the appointment. As I had refused on grounds connected with my occupation as a missionary, Lord Panmure will not press the appointment on me. Unless the Lord in his providence should shut me up to such a course of acting, I feel more and more that I could not safely leave for a moment the position I occupy; and had I accepted the appointment, I would have found on the one hand at least, up to the present time, that the troops among whom I was expected to be, had gone to India instead of coming here, and on the other hand would have been in the greatest danger, from knowing Chinese, of being diverted from my proper work, and sinking down into a kind of interpreter about all and sundry matters. Mr. L——, whom you once wrote to me about after he had been in Glasgow, has lately got into a position somewhat of this kind. He is now at Canton assisting generally the provisional government established there by the English and French until matters are settled at Peking. He about a year ago disagreed somehow with the Chinese Evangelization Society, and became government school (Chinese) inspector in Hong-Kong, and from the newspapers I have just seen that he is gone to Canton in the capacity I have mentioned. . . . —Your affectionate brother,—WM. C. BURNS."

The carpentry labours here referred to were only a recurrence to the occupations and acquired skill of former days, when as a boy he lifted up his axe upon the trees around the manse of Kilsyth. Now he found the change of scene and the bracing exercise of great advantage to him, "as tending powerfully to reinvigorate his physical powers, after being a good deal tired through a too confined position at Swatow." It spoke well for the solidity and workmanlike character of his work, that, as his friends afterwards remarked, in a terrible hurricane which shortly after passed over the district, sweeping away the entire shipping and demolishing a great part of the houses both at Swatow and Double Island, his was the only house amongst those in its vicinity which stood the blast. One other incident of a startling and solemn kind marked the period of his residence at Swatow. A terrible visitation of cholera passed, during several months, over the whole district of which it forms the centre, and created a wide-spread terror which brought out in a striking and affecting way the gross blindness and superstition of the people:—

"It is melancholy to see the means to which the people resort in order to free themselves from this dreadful visitation of God's hand. First, they had a procession of *lanterns*, each house furnishing one or more large lanterns, with bearers for them. This was continued for three successive nights. Next they had a public procession, continued during the day and a great part of the night, with drums and gongs making a discordant noise to *drive away evil spirits from the streets;* this was accompanied too with plays and exhibitions of all sorts of finery, children on horseback, &c. Our doors or windows were shut, so that I can give no description of what I did not wish to see. Again the people went out in procession to a neighbouring field, and drew water to drink, a cupful of which was ordered as a recipe against the disease. These means having failed, for the last week or more all animal food, fish or flesh, has been forbidden. On one day no one was to wash clothes; and, to my surprise, on Monday, 19th, when I went up from Double Island, the town appeared like a forest of shipping, high flag-staffs being erected in all directions, formed of long bamboos, fixed the one above the other, and some as high as a ship's mast; to these are attached small flags: and at night small lanterns are suspended from them. In what way these things are expected to be beneficial I cannot ascertain. The only answer to be got is that they are ordered by their idols; and this brings out the most affecting feature of the whole. There are young lads who either really are possessed by evil spirits or feign to be so, and in a kind of raving madness give out what are looked upon as the oracular voice of the idol whom the people worship. There are two principal idols' temples in Swatow; and both of these idols have been in succession personated by these insane youths, by whom this blinded people are led! It is by such direction that all the foregoing remedies have been used to save them from cholera! Not one word is heard of the need of repentance, or of turning from any of the sins in which this people are lying, and in which they seem to go on with as unblushing boldness as before. How true that darkness covereth the earth and gross darkness the people! What need that He should arise and shine who is the Light of the world! In the midst of such a people how weak and helpless does all mere human instrumentality appear, and what need have God's people to pray for us that in these circumstances our faith may not fail, and that we may not sit down in despondency, but still persevere in doing the work of the Lord among this people!"

One or two further extracts from his correspondence will complete the history of his labours here, which were marked by no other memorable event or important change, save only the gradual opening up of the field and the increasing interest and hopefulness of his work. His remarkable reception and hospitable treatment at the town of Tat-haw-poe is especially interesting, as an instance of the manner in which he often overcame difficulties by simply confronting them in the spirit of faith and prayer, and found favour in the sight of those from whom hostility and opposition only had been expected:—

"*Swatow, August 5th,* 1857.—Whatever change we can mark is in the way of progress. The medical work brings an increasing number of persons about us, to whom we seek to make known the truth, and gives us, in connection with our efforts to diffuse the truths of the gospel, a very favourable position in the eyes of the community. There is a district of country, Phoo-ning, at a distance varying from thirty to fifty English miles, from which we have had of late an unusual number of visitors, both men and women. They have taken lodgings near us for a succession of days, and not only have seemed to value the medical aid for which they came, but have very generally attended all our daily religious services, and have shown a more than common interest in our message. That district of country seems particularly afflicted with a species of leprosy, and some persons suffering from this and other diseases having received benefit, the poor people form parties and come out, at no inconsiderable trouble and expense to themselves. Those that come to us from this and other quarters we generally make the bearers of tracts and Scriptures to their villages; and sometimes when we neglect to supply them, they apply of their own accord. . . .

"A week or two ago a large party of women thus came, having hired a boat for themselves, and many of them seemed a good deal interested in our message. One old matron of seventy-three I was specially interested with. Staying opposite she was often below stairs. She came generally to worship, and by her serious and intelligent look one might hope that she understood something of what was taught her. One evening, after she retired from worship, I heard her, across the street, mentioning the Saviour's name, and she appeared to be attempting to pray."

"*Swatow, June 9th*, 1858.—MY DEAR MOTHER,—Dr. De la Porte is at last about to leave us. He was here seeing patients yesterday, as I suppose, for the last time, and to-morrow, if the Lord will, I go down to Double Island to see him away. He goes down to Hong-Kong in the expectation of finding a vessel in which to sail for England. It was affecting yesterday to join with him in prayer, probably for the last time, in a place where we have had so many meetings at the mercy-seat, and when he was gone, the thought that we should see him not again here caused a tender pang which found relief only in looking up to Him who hath said, 'I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.'—WM. C. BURNS."

"*Swatow, September 15th*, 1858.—Four weeks ago, after the assistants and I had specially sought the divine direction, we determined that two of them should go direct to Tat-haw-poe (a large town about 4 or 5 miles from Double Island) from Swatow, and that the following day, August 17th, one of them should join me at Double Island, and conduct me from there to Tat-haw-poe. He failed to come for me on the day appointed, and next morning came to say that, at Tat-haw-poe had just been posted up a Canton proclamation, warning the people from having anything to do with the English, and that it was a question I must myself decide whether I would venture to go or not. There was some reason to fear that no one would give me lodging, but I thought it my duty to go, and, wonderful to say, just as we were about to conclude addressing the people, a man of respectability invited us into his hong, gave us a kind welcome, asked where I was to lodge, and when he found that there was but poor accommodation in the shop where my assistants were staying, he pressed us to come to him, leading me from room to room, and desiring me to take which one I preferred. Finally he put me into his own room, and one of the assistants into the adjoining; and there I remained for several days. Though passing the night in this gentleman's hong, we continued to take our meals in the shop where the assistants had been lodging, until on Saturday morning, August 21st, the shopman informed us that his landlord had, on the previous night, given him notice, that he must on no account admit foreigners into his shop, and that therefore I must cease to come. On this we went and made known the matter to our host, asking him whether he shared in the fears of this man. He made no account of the matter at all, and said that though, from the near approach of a Chinese term, he was a good deal occupied, and could not attend to us as he wished, if I would come again in a few days, he would give us an unoccupied part of his house to stay in as long as we liked.

"In this he was not deceiving us; for while I returned back to Double Island on that day, one of the assistants continued to remain in his house, and yesterday, September 14th, I returned from a second visit of six days, and have now a room waiting me whenever I am able to go."

But the work at Swatow, at least for the present, was now drawing to a close. The departure of Dr. De la Porte had greatly abridged his power of effectively occupying the field, and at the same time urgent invitations came to him from his brethren at Amoy, to return, at least for a season, to the scene of his former labours amongst the villages of Fokien. After much hesitation he consented, on the understanding that the Rev. George Smith, a young missionary of great devotedness and high promise, who had recently joined their number, should meanwhile, more or less permanently, take his place at Swatow. He had as yet reaped but little fruit of his labours in this field; he could not count one single decided convert from amongst all the multitudes to whom he had here declared the Word of life; but he had thoroughly broken up the ground, and plenteously sowed the seeds of a harvest, to be gathered in by those that should come after him, and enter into his labours.

He sailed for Amoy about the middle of October, 1858, and reached that place in safety a few days after. His next letter is, alike in its date and its subject-matter, deeply touching, and a brief extract from it will fitly close this chapter:—

"*Amoy, November 25th*, 1858.—I am sitting in the room formerly occupied by our dear and respected brother[1] and fellow-labourer who is now no more with us, but has, like his divine Master, left us an example that we should follow his steps, in order that we may overcome like him at last through the blood of the Lamb and the word of his testimony! On the occasion of his so sudden removal from us I felt unable in any suitable manner to write to any of his kindred, although I took the pen in hand more than once to do so. On coming up here four weeks ago, I went to see the spot where his mortal remains are laid. It is as yet marked by no monumental stone, but is side by side with the graves of not a few members, old and young, of the missionary circle, and with many of them we trust he will rise in glory at the Lord's coming. What a lesson to us, and to all! When little more than a year ago I visited Amoy, I had much sweet intercourse with him; and as the vessel that conveyed me back to Swatow left the harbour, he stood on the balcony above, and waved to me until we were out of sight. Now we may imagine him from a higher elevation, beckoning us to follow on in the Christian race, laying aside every weight, and running that we may reach the prize—the crown of life, which we believe has been already given to him by his Saviour and Lord."

CHAPTER XIX.

1858–63.

OLD SCENES AND NEW.

While Mr. Burns was thus laboriously preparing the way for future labourers in the comparatively hard and unkindly soil around Swatow, his missionary brethren had been reaping a rich and almost continuous harvest at the parent station of Amoy. His young colleague, Mr. Douglas, had entered on his work at a most auspicious moment, and had abundantly shared in that blessing which for the last three years had so signally rested on that favoured field, and on all connected with it. The number of converts and of inquirers in connection with all the societies increased rapidly; the zeal, love, and hopeful faith, alike of missionaries and of native disciples, deepened; and the Word of the Lord sounded out more and more widely over the whole region round. The valleys of the hill country, on the mainland to the west, had become in particular one wide and busy harvest field of souls. The sacred fire, kindled the year before at a single spot, spread gradually, chiefly through the spontaneous zeal of converts and native evangelists, to the towns and villages around, and one living church after another rose up as lights amid the darkness. Speedily the daughter societies of Bay-pay and Chióh-bey rivalled alike in numbers and in fervour the mother congregation at Pechuia, while lesser groups of Christian worshippers were scattered here and there over the valleys and hills. In the absence of European labourers, or of trained native evangelists, the members of the infant churches themselves became the willing and zealous messengers of the Cross, and the Word of the Lord spread as by its own divine inherent might from village to village, and from heart to heart. Sometimes even it would be found that a single soul having heard the divine message, perhaps only once at some central mission station, had carried some living seeds of truth home to some sequestered village among the hills, and there alone, amid heathen idolaters, by feeble prayers to the true God, and rude endeavours to keep the Christian Sabbath, nursed the sacred germ, until some Christian evangelist came to water and to foster it. The aspect of the scene, as it presented itself to the young missionary on his first survey of the field, was thus exceedingly exhilarating.

---

[1] The devoted and greatly beloved David Sandeman, who died of cholera, at Amoy, July 31, 1858, and whose memory has been embalmed in an interesting biography by the Rev. A. A. Bonar.

"A glorious work of God," said he (Jan. 3, 1856), "has been wrought in this place, and He is working still, and by his dealings we seem warranted to expect that all this is but the merest beginning of the abundant blessing that he is about to bestow on this place and neighbourhood. For several years after this port was opened the labours seemed almost in vain, and when about seven years ago the drops began to fall, they were very very few; but somewhat about two years ago, the conversions became more numerous, and now the number of living adult members is—London Missionary Society, here and at Ko-lang-soo, 150; American Mission here, 100; at Chióh-bey, 22; and our station at Pechuia, 25. Of these the London Society has 39 female members, and the Americans about the same number. You can now judge by what I have said as to the past and the present; while as to the future, our hopes rest, under the mercy and love of God, on various reasons,—partly the zeal and prayerfulness stirred up at home, partly on the singularly steady progress and continued proportional increase of the converting work, which is also peculiarly free from any excesses of enthusiasm or superstition; and very much on the fact that the converts, almost all, are full of zeal to lead their relatives and friends to become partakers of the like precious faith, and to instruct in the Scriptures and 'the doctrine' those who are younger in Christ; they seem, so far as I can see, to delight to tell those who are still without, of the grace and peace which they have found.

"There are altogether fifteen native Christians employed as colporteurs and evangelists by the various missions; these assist in conducting the services in the chapels, and quite as often conduct them themselves; they also go out into the streets, and the neighbouring villages and towns, distributing tracts and Testaments, preaching and conversing with the people."

When about a year after his arrival the missionary was able himself to preach in the Chinese language, the evangelistic work went on still more vigorously. From the wise and judicious director, he became now the energetic leader of the company of preachers, traversing in every direction the whole region round Amoy, till there was scarcely one important centre of population on either side of the Chang-chow estuary in which the joyful sound had not been heard. Old stations flourished, and new fields opened up, which seemed scarcely less ripe for the harvest. Seldom did a month pass in which there were not in some of the churches inquirers to be instructed, and converts to be baptized; while the old members, for the most part, visibly grew in faith, in knowledge, and in Christian activity and zeal. A numerous "school of the prophets," too, for the training of native evangelists and teachers, flourished under the missionary's own care, at the central station at Amoy, and held out the prospect of still more active and extensive operations in the time to come.

But this bright picture had also its darker shadow. "It is impossible but that offences shall come." Tares will ever mingle with the wheat even in the richest and fairest fields of the Church, and the infant churches of Fokien were no exceptions to this universal rule. The mother congregation at Pechuia, in particular, had become latterly the subject of grave solicitude to the missionaries. Dissensions had arisen about the building of a chapel; one or two cases of scandal had occurred amongst the members; death and change had of late visibly thinned the ranks of the little society, while few new disciples were rising up to fill the vacant places. It seemed indeed as if the fresh spirit of life, under which at first they had grown exceedingly, at once in numbers and in fervour, had passed away, and that the work had become stationary, or even retrograde. It was in these circumstances that Mr. Burns had been urged by his brother missionary to return, at least for a season, to the scene of his former labours, and to bear his share of the increasing anxieties and responsibility of their common work.

On his arrival at Pechuia he found the evils of which he had heard less serious than he had feared, but still sufficiently grave to call for prompt and vigorous corrective measures. On Feb. 22d, 1859, he writes from Amoy:—

> "There are two persons there who have fallen away from their Christian profession; but neither of them had from the beginning, as far as I learn, any marked evidence of a work of grace. The only really melancholy case that I know of, is one who was chapel-keeper, and afterwards a preacher, but who, there is reason to fear, has again fallen under the power of opium-smoking."

The general aspect of affairs, however, as it presented itself to him after so long an absence, was on the whole most cheering.

> "I wonder," says he, "more than ever I did at the reality and preciousness of the work of the divine Spirit at Pechuia and the neighbouring stations. May the time be near when new and like glorious manifestations of the Lord's saving power shall be witnessed in this and in all lands! . . . Yesterday we had about forty of the converts in this neighbourhood assembled at the communion at Pechuia; and to-day, in coming here, fully a dozen accompanied me, most of them returning home. It was a sweet contrast with the state of things five years ago, when we first visited Pechuia, and when in this whole neighbourhood there was probably not a single follower of the Lamb. 'These, where had they been?' These from the land of Sinim! Oh! glorious day, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be converted unto Emmanuel; when all nations shall be blessed in Him, and all nations shall call him blessed! Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Take unto thee thy great power and reign."

Two of the offending members were, after all gentler means of remedy had been tried in vain, cut off from communion, while two others were subjected to the faithful but loving discipline of the Church, with a view to their repentance and restoration. Remedial measures, too, of a more permanent kind were at the same time adopted. A regular body of office-bearers, according to the Presbyterian model, was constituted at Pechuia, as had been already done at Amoy and Chióh-bey; the whole proceedings of the election being conducted in a most orderly manner, in an assembly of the native church itself. Another measure not less memorable originated with the native brethren themselves, and is in its whole circumstances and history deeply touching.

"A fortnight ago," writes Mr. Burns, "at the instance of one of the elders at Chióh-bey (who is one of the Pechuia converts, and was one of the chief founders, as he *is* one of the pillars of the Chióh-bey church), the Pechuia, in concert with the Chióh-bey church, observed a season of solemn prayer and fasting, that they might seek the return of the Lord's favour to Pechuia. I was at Chióh-bey when this season was observed—Tuesday, the 16th of August. There was a large attendance of church members, *and when the elder I have alluded to, I-ju, began to pray, he was so affected that he could hardly proceed.* The preacher at Chióh-bey, Tow-lo, who began his work as a preacher at Pechuia in 1854, *was also sobbing aloud.* It was evident that the Lord was in the midst of us."

Another event of the deepest interest occurred this year, which is so strikingly illustrative of the whole character of the mission, and of the infant churches to which it has given birth, that I shall relate the circumstances at length in the words of one of the missionaries.

"Last month," says Mr. Douglas, "a step in advance was taken by the Amoy church, which seems to me most important, and the most cheering which has been taken since that church was organized. It was the setting apart of two native evangelists, *entirely supported by the native church in Amoy*, under the care of the American missionaries.

"The novelty and cheering interest of this step does not lie in the use of native evangelists. These have long been employed, and found quite indispensable in the instruction and extension of the Church. But the singular interest of what has just been begun is, that these two native evangelists are as completely independent of foreign money, as the ministers of Canada or Australia. Of course the church itself is still dependent for instruction on the foreign missionaries and on agents paid by them; but in the case of these two new evangelists, a beginning has been made of the self-supporting principle.

"It was after abundant prayer and careful counting of the cost, that this work was begun. The choice of the two brethren honoured by the Master to undertake this office was quite independent of the missionaries, the names being only submitted for approval or rejection after the choice, before the setting apart. On that day the native members of the other church at Amoy, that, namely, under the care of the London Missionary Society, were invited to be present. Almost all the missionaries of the several societies were there. And already both that church and the younger churches on the mainland are considering whether they be able to follow the example so well set to them.

"The field chosen for these new labourers is the unevangelized portion of the island of Amoy, which is just the whole island (about thirty miles in circumference), except the town itself. How wonderful and glorious the ways of God! While he is opening up our way to the towns and cities at a greater distance around, he is taking care that the populous villages of the immediate neighbourhood be not neglected."

Amid these interesting and fruitful pastoral cares, the more extended and aggressive work of the mission went on vigorously—the missionaries "using the 'Gospel Boat' as their home in going from place to place in evangelistic work, for which the rivers of China afford so great facility." Another attempt was made to effect a permanent lodgment within the walls of the great city of Chang-chow,[1] but was for the time defeated in consequence of a singular incident.

---

[1] See pp. 254, 255.

"A week ago," writes Mr. Burns, "we were living near the district magistrate's office. He had gone out about midnight, on Sabbath the 13th, to inspect the streets, and just as he was passing our lodging, one of the assistants, when the other had gone to rest, suddenly, in the fulness of his heart, began aloud to sing a Christian hymn. The unusual sound attracted the mandarin; he listened, and hearing that a foreigner was there, he next day sent to ask us to leave the city."

In another direction, however, some hopeful tokens had begun to appear in places to which Mr. Douglas' eye had been long and anxiously turned. At Anhai, a town of about 18,000 or 20,000 inhabitants, situated at the head of a long inlet, about thirty-five miles north-east from Amoy, an opening had been found for the truth, which soon led to the establishment of a regular mission station, and to the foundation of one of the most numerous and fruitful of the Chinese native churches.

It was in the midst of these interesting and congenial labours that Mr. Burns received the following touching lines from his early friend, James Hamilton, which I am tempted to insert as a fragrant memorial both of the writer himself and of that gracious and benignant friend whose character he embalms:—

"48 *Euston Square, London, N.W., May* 10*th*, 1859.—MY DEAR FRIEND,—Two hours ago I received a notification of what will doubtless be communicated to you in fuller detail from home—the entrance into his everlasting rest of your beloved father, on the morning of Sabbath last. It was only a few weeks after his retirement from his ministerial work; so that the heavenly Sabbath has followed sooner than he hoped. It has been a wonderfully serene and blameless life, and in the remarkable visitation of his people twenty years ago he has been a rarely happy minister. The announcement has sent my own thoughts back to Kilsyth and Strathblane, and to incidents that transpired 'full many years agone.' To you in your far place of sojourn the tidings will be very affecting. It is touching to think that you will see his face no more; but oh! how blessed is his own case, who now sees Jesus face to face, and who from a life of prayer has passed to one of praise.

"Last January I saw him and your dear mother in Glasgow; they had come in to attend the meeting on behalf of China in Free St. Matthew's (Dr. S. Miller's). Your father seemed to me very much the same as ever. He sat on a chair which was placed for him beside the pulpit, and the congregation evidently eyed him with much reverence and affection.

"'The fathers, where are they?' I often feel it solemn now to know that we are getting into the fore-front; no generation any longer between ourselves and the great reckoning.

. . . .

"With love to all the brethren, I remain, affectionately yours,
"JAMES HAMILTON."

In October, 1859, Mr. Burns was again on his way towards a new and distant sphere of labour. The special service for which he had come to Fokien, and for which the peculiar relation in which he stood to the inland churches there gave him a special advantage, had been satisfactorily accomplished, and now he longed to return to his old work of pioneering the way of other labourers in regions where the gospel had not yet found an entrance. The nearest and most natural centre of operations was Fuh-chow—the capital city of the province to which Amoy belongs, and here accordingly he spent most of the next year—quickly acquiring the new dialect, preparing a hymn-book for the use of the infant church, and unweariedly sowing, as usual, the gospel-seed. Of these labours the following notice has been kindly furnished to me by an esteemed Christian brother.

"When Mr. Burns," says the Rev. C. Hartwell, one of the oldest missionaries of the American Board at Fuh-chow, "first came to Fuh-chow in October, 1859, he divided his labours between preaching in English and studying and preaching in

Chinese. He spent his Sabbaths at the 'Pagoda Anchorage,'[1] preaching on ship-board to seamen and others who came to his services. The week-days he spent at Fuh-chow, studying the spoken dialect, and for a short time preaching two evenings in a week in the Amoy dialect, to the tin-foil beaters and others from the Amoy region living here, who were induced by special invitation to attend his services in our church. . . .

"Besides attending the services of other missionaries, he himself held others in our churches, in which at first the native helpers did the preaching, he simply directing the exercises, and occasionally suggesting points to them upon which he wished them to speak. He was quite successful in this mode of effort, and the helpers as well as others were benefited by the meetings. . . .

"He also assisted us by visiting some of our out-stations in the country, and labouring in these places. One of our present out-stations was commenced by him. We had opened a chapel some miles back of the place in a smaller village, but had been unable to secure one in this large village until his effort was successful. He laboured at this place for some time, and several persons manifested some interest in the truth, but none of them have yet given evidence of piety. When he left Fuh-chow the last time, he gave funds to employ an extra helper for this village for some time, and the out-station has been fully manned by us ever since; but, for unknown reasons, it has hitherto proved our least successful field of labour.

"Not desiring to open a new mission at Fuh-chow, during his stay here, Mr. Burns sought to aid each of the three missions already established, as opportunity offered and occasion seemed to require. He did not confine his assistance to any one of them. He sought for openings where he could be useful in promoting the work generally, and in this he was very successful. His catholicity of feeling made him ever ready to aid at any weak point.

"The particulars in which, as it seems to me, he most aided our mission—and in fact the others also—were his excellent influence upon our native assistants, and in successfully introducing the use of colloquial hymns among us in our worship.

---

[1] "Pagoda Anchorage" is the place where large ships lie, about twelve miles below the city; it is so called from a pagoda on "Pagoda Island."

"Our helpers soon learned to feel a great regard for Mr. Burns, and their piety was quickened and deepened apparently through his influence. His power over them arose from his own deep piety; his accurate knowledge of the Chinese language; the great fund of Christian knowledge at his command; and the singleness of purpose which he ever manifested. We felt it to be a privilege to have our native preachers under his influence and instruction.

"Previous to his coming among us all our hymns used in worship had been in the written language, as had been the case elsewhere generally in China. His attempt, though not the only one, was the first which was successful in introducing the use of colloquial hymns for this purpose. With the aid of native preachers he prepared some of the hymns used at Amoy and Swatow, in the spoken dialect of Fuh-chow. These he first printed in sheet form, and used them in street-preaching and chapel-preaching, till he was convinced that they were in a good colloquial style, and then he published them as amended in a book form, and they soon came into general use among us. He showed his usual enthusiasm in introducing his hymns, and the force of his character had much weight in overcoming the prejudices of our better educated Christians to the general use of colloquial hymns. Our hymn-book has been much enlarged, but the hymns prepared by Mr. Burns are still general favourites. His influence for good here, doubtless, will be perpetuated for a long time to come through the use of these hymns."

In September of the next year (1860) he returned to the neighbourhood of Amoy, in consequence of some trying circumstances to which we shall have presently to refer in greater detail; and then, after only a brief stay, passed on to his old home at Swatow, where he found to his joy that the wilderness which he had left so short a time before had begun in a remarkable manner to blossom, under the able and devoted labours of his successor, Mr. Smith. The day after his arrival he preached to the natives, and the change for the better that had come over the people in their desire to hear the gospel since his first visit, five years previously, affected him almost to tears on the occasion. Here also he compiled a hymn-book in the colloquial dialect, which proved a precious boon to the young converts.[1]

He returned to Fuh-chow in the course of the next year, and continued his labours there for some months longer. But, meanwhile, events had occurred in the neighbourhood of Amoy which required his presence there for a more lengthened period, and which ultimately led to his removal to the capital city of Peking.

Allusion has already been made more than once to the fiery trial to which these infant churches have been almost continually exposed through the bitter opposition and hostility of their heathen fellow-countrymen. The political jealousy of the ruling class, and the religious rancour of the people, united in common antipathy to the professors of a strange and alien faith. The mandarins suspected the foreign creed; the multitude hated the singular and exclusive worship. To the philosophic Confucian they were obnoxious as fanatics; to the superstitious devotee, as enemies of the gods and despisers of the ancestral rites. Hence a general and constant sentiment of mingled suspicion, dislike, and fear, which was ever in danger, on the least provocation, of breaking out into open acts of hostility and lawless violence. They were seldom, indeed, called to witness for their divine Master unto blood; never, perhaps, except when some terrible misconception might involve the Christian evangelist in supposed complicity with the schemes of traitors and rebels; but short of this there was scarcely any extreme of hardship and suffering to which they might not be subjected.

---

[1] *Narrative, &c.*, p. 60.

Their houses were spoiled. Their property was destroyed. Their rice-fields were laid waste. Their cattle were driven away. Their pine-trees were cut down. They were refused the use of the public wells. Their supply of labourers was cut off by hostile combination in time of harvest. Their places of worship were rudely assailed, and their sacred assemblies interrupted, without hope of protection or redress from any native authority. One or two instances of this petty but vexatious persecution may be given from the letters of the missionaries. Thus one of the members of the Bay-pay church, of the name of Wat, had been called upon to pay the accustomed tribute in support of the idolatrous ceremonies at one of the great feasts. He refused. Forthwith he was denied water from the public well, and his son was beaten in attempting to fetch it. Then they cut down a large number of his pine-trees, which formed a considerable portion of his property; and as he appealed for redress in vain, they proceeded next to cut down his fruit-trees. Other members of the same church had their rice-fields and other property plundered, and at one time three of the female candidates for baptism were severely beaten by their relatives. At Yam-tsau, in the Swatow district, one poor widow had her house plundered on the Lord's-day when she was at church; another member had his field of sugar-cane destroyed; a third had his fowls stolen; and all were constantly exposed to the scoffs and reproaches of their fellow-villagers and the unbelieving members of their own families. Sometimes the malicious designs of the adversary were defeated in singular ways, or signally overruled for good. One day the police entered the premises of the old cloth merchant at Pechuia, intending to plunder or perhaps to seize him. Being rather deaf, he did not hear their demand, but he said, "O yes; I know what you have come for," and taking down some of his goods, and pointing to the rest, he said, "Take them, take them all, and I'll go with you, too; but I am old, and rather deaf; take my boys, too, and my little girl there. We are all Christians, we are not afraid; we will go with you." The men, astonished at this novel reception, left the premises without injuring any of the inmates, or touching an article of their property. While one was thus preserved by his own simple and unworldly faith, another was succoured by the brotherly love of his fellow-disciples. An old farmer, who resided about five miles from Khi-boey, a village about thirty miles to the south-west of Pechuia, having become a Christian, his heathen neighbours evinced their bitter dislike by refusing at harvest time to give him the least assistance in reaping his rice-fields. On hearing of the old man's trouble, the brethren at Khi-boey at once resolved to go to his help; a band of them started one evening for the farm, and commencing operations early next morning, they worked so heartily that the fields were all reaped in one day, to the surprise of the neighbours, and to the comfort and relief of their brother in distress. Such trials as these had fallen of late with peculiar severity on some of the village churches in the Pechuia district, and called for some vigorous intervention in their behalf on the part of their spiritual overseers. The case of Bay-pay has been already incidentally alluded to. More recently at the above-mentioned village of Khi-boey, where an interesting and prosperous church had been recently established, the disciples had been called to pass, while yet, as it were, in their very infancy, through a great fight of affliction.

"On hearing of the disturbances, Mr. Swanson at once repaired to Khi-boey, and was gratified to find that though the persecution still raged, the converts were keeping firm and hopeful, and that fourteen of them were in a state of preparedness for baptism. No house could be had for divine service, and they had to gather under the shade of a magnificent lung-yen tree. The persecution ceased for a time, but the missionaries were soon again summoned to interpose in their behalf. Chioh, in whose house the Christians had been in the habit of assembling, was driven from his home, and on his attempting to take refuge in the house of another Christian, the roof was broken in by a mob, and Chioh prevented from entering. His widowed sister was then attacked, and her son threatened with death unless they complied with their demand for money; a sword was brandished over the lad's head, while they required that he should cease to worship God. This he resolutely refused, declaring himself ready to die rather than renounce his faith. Chioh and another went down to Amoy for advice, and Mr. Burns at once returned with them to see what could be done. While he was attempting to pacify the enraged villagers, one of the converts was set upon by a number of men armed with bludgeons and pikes, and severely beaten, and might have been killed, but for his timely intervention."

No one assuredly was ever in a better position to interfere in such a case than one who for so many years, and amid all his wanderings amongst this heathen people, had so simply and wholly cast himself on the care of his divine Master, and had never in any single instance invoked the succour of the secular arm in his own defence. The rights which he had never sought to enforce in his own behalf he could the more boldly and freely, and with the greater effect, plead in behalf of others. Ever ready himself to suffer, he was prompt to hold his protecting shield over those who were less able to suffer than he. He spoke accordingly in their behalf with a resolute force and decision which, in dealing with secular matters, was not usual with him. A formal representation was made to the Chinese authorities, through the British consul, who himself took up the case very cordially, and threatened that, if immediate justice were not done, he would report the case to Peking. This produced the desired result. It was promised that the stolen property should be restored, and money given in compensation for property destroyed. But the Christians, before consenting to this offer, preferred consulting Mr. Burns at Amoy, who at once came again to their aid, and obtained from the magistrates the following terms:—

(1.) Restoration, so far as possible, of the very articles stolen;

(2.) A bond from the enemies to guarantee their non-interference with the Christians; and

(3.) A proclamation to be issued, exhorting the people not to interfere with the Christians.

"Most happily all this was agreed to, and the enemies seeing the turn matters were taking, and fearing the violence of their own authorities, prayed for the interposition of the missionaries in their behalf. Mr. Burns gladly used his influence accordingly, and thus all ended well. The stolen property was restored in presence of the mandarins, Mr. Burns, and an immense concourse of people. The poor Christians carried their pigs and led back their oxen to the homes from which they had so lately been driven, rejoicing, and yet we hope humble. On the same day the enemies entered into a bond not to interfere with those who were, or might become Christians, and not to annoy them in any way. In a few days after, the mandarins issued a proclamation, intimating that the case was now settled, and strictly forbidding all persons from interfering with any one 'who may enter the holy religion of Jesus.' Not the least remarkable feature in the termination of these disturbances was, that the enemies looked upon the missionaries as their best friends, for having shielded them from the severity of the mandarins."[1]

Thus for once, and in behalf of Christ's "little ones," had "the Man of the Book" sustained the character of the vigorous, sagacious, and successful diplomatist. The storm for the present passed away. Then for a season had the churches rest throughout the towns and villages of Fokien. But the permanent relations of the native Christians towards their heathen countrymen were still in a very uncertain and precarious state, and it was thought important that Mr. Burns should proceed to Peking, with the view of obtaining a personal interview with Sir Frederick Bruce, and thus, if possible, effecting a more secure and satisfactory settlement. He left Amoy accordingly, and arrived at the capital, in October, 1863, thus entering on the last period of his missionary career.

---

[1] *Narrative, &c.*, p. 40, 41.

CHAPTER XX.

1863–68.

PEKING AND NIEU-CHWANG.

In tracing the last footsteps of my lamented brother at Peking and Nieu-chwang, I have been happily furnished with such ample materials from the hands of loving brethren of different Christian communions, that it will scarcely be necessary for me to do aught more than simply to quote their tender and graphic words. Some of these communications have come so spontaneously, and from quarters to me so unexpected, that it has seemed but as the breathing fragrance of precious ointment, which *must* flow forth, and which cannot be hid, when the alabaster box is broken. To this part of our narrative the following vivid and interesting notices, from the pen of S. Wells Williams, LL.D., Secretary of the United States Legation at Peking, will form a peculiarly appropriate introduction—all the more so that they are in part retrospective, touching the missionary's career at various points, where the paths of the two friends crossed one another during the course of twenty years:—

"When I recall," says this distinguished scholar and missionary, "the voice and form of Mr. Burns, they revive my earliest notions of one of the old Hebrew prophets, of a man whose high vocation had somewhat separated him from common communion with those around him; this idea impressed itself so much upon my mind when I first met him in Hong-Kong, in Sept. 1848, that it always invested his character and name, and does so even more now that he has gone. Our intercourse was of the most cordial nature; but being a printer, and having no work with him, I was not so much thrown into his company as he was with Dr. Hobson at Canton, Mr. Doty at Amoy, and others who had chapels where he could preach. I have therefore not so many recollections of Mr. Burns as might be inferred from an acquaintance of twenty years, and have not preserved a single line of his writing.

"His determination and singleness of purpose in the mission work were illustrated in his account of the way he began the study of the language on his voyage to China. The only book which he could find in London to aid him in this study was my *English and Chinese Vocabulary;* with this he procured a volume of Matthew's Gospel, and perhaps a tract or two. He then examined the first verses of the 2d chapter, learned the figures so as to distinguish the verses, and taking the first characters, hunted through the Vocabulary till he found them as the Chinese equivalents of the English words, reconstructing the sentences, as he found one word after the other, until he had found out the sound, meaning, and radical of each character. Then he wrote them over and over, until he had acquired them thoroughly. This tedious way of learning the characters was continued until he arrived in Hong-Kong; but no one, unless acquainted with the Chinese language, can fully appreciate the tedium of acquiring its characters otherwise than by beginning with the radicals. I think he went over nearly the whole Gospel in this way before the end of the voyage, and then sat down to the study with a preparation and zest that few have brought to the task. It was a pleasant gratification to me to learn that the time spent on that small vocabulary had helped Mr. Burns in his labours, for I remembered how helpless I felt on my voyage out fifteen years before, when I had no possible means of learning a single character, and reached the country quite ignorant of the people and their language.

"I went to Canton, and saw no more of Mr. Burns until he came to that city to live in 1850. Before that date I heard of his having been robbed of all his baggage while living on the mainland, opposite Hong-Kong, whither he had gone to see what could be done in effecting a settlement among the people. The thieves broke up his quarters, and while he was present helped themselves to clothes, books, and money as they pleased, leaving him just enough garments for protection, and means to get back to Hong-Kong. One fellow had his hone, and being puzzled to know its use, brought it to Mr. Burns to learn what it was fit for, and was patiently taught the mode of sharpening a razor or knife on it. These ruffians did not belong to the villagers, but the latter made no attempt to defend or protect the foreigner. But, no doubt, this beginning had its salutary effect upon them."

From another informant I am enabled to add one or two further touches to this characteristic and romantic incident. He had, it would appear, with some hesitation, and without any clear indication of the Master's will, proceeded westward beyond the range of his first labours, into a part of the country where the people were notoriously less accessible and friendly; and being afraid that he had run, without being sent, into the midst of unknown difficulties and dangers, he had lain long awake in anxious and pensive questioning. While still thus musing he became suddenly aware of the presence in the chamber of two muffled figures, who, approaching with stealthy steps and blackened faces to his bedside, stood over him with naked swords held to his breast. "Do no violence, my friends," he said calmly, "and you shall have all I have;" and then followed the characteristic scene described by Dr. Williams. When the landlord of the house came in next morning to condole with his guest on his loss, "Poor fellows!" said he, "let us pray for them." The robbers took with them literally all he had, save only the contents of a loose bag, which lay in a corner of the room, and which, seeming to contain nothing but useless papers, had fortunately been neglected by them. Beneath the papers, however, there were some shreds of under garment, of which the missionary contrived to make for himself an outlandish costume, in which he found his way back to the sea-coast, and thence to Hong-Kong; waiting under cover in the boat until the return of a messenger supplied him with the means of appearing on shore in a more appropriate garb.

"He was induced ere long," continues Dr. Williams, "by the little success the work had at Canton, to go further north, and try to reach people who lived away from so much contact as the Cantonese had with foreigners. He found the work more congenial at Amoy and Swatow, where, and in their vicinity, he spent many years, and did a great and lasting work in extending missionary labours among their rural populations, and founding Christian communities. . . .

"After Mr. Burns' return to China, I saw nothing of him till he had reached Hong-Kong, after his liberation by Governor Yeh at Canton, in October, 1856, after they had brought him overland to that city from Chaou-chow-foo by way of Kiaying-chow. He there learned that some of the native Christians who had been with him at Swatow before his own arrest, were in prison, and he wished to get near to them so that he might do what he could for their welfare. There was no vessel going to Swatow except a small native junk, and we dissuaded Mr. Burns from embarking in such a rickety craft at so late a period of the year, even as a matter of time; for by a little delay he would no doubt find a safer vessel, which would land him there quicker. But nothing would move him. He had heard the voice of God, and felt no fears as to the result of the voyage. He left that night in her, reaching Swatow after nearly a month's tedious coasting, which however was, I suppose, no loss to him, for he preached to the crew, and suffered no derangement in his plans by the delay. This example of our friend, in regarding the people wherever he met them as his audience, is one that cannot be too strongly urged upon all heralds of the gospel in heathen lands. Yet this feature of his mind had its effect in deterring those around him from giving him advice when he asked it, inasmuch as he followed his inward convictions sometimes when outward arguments tended the other way. In this instance, the time of the year, and the unsettled condition of the coast, would have weighed with most men to seek another mode of conveyance; but whether such a course as he took in such dilemmas—that of seeking a manifestation of some kind to know what the will of God is—would answer for all, or whether all are capable of hearing the inward voice, is a curious question. I have never known another person who had as little hesitation in following what he regarded as this inward monition and guidance. In this instance there was no long weighing of the reasons, nor much discussion upon their value; he had looked squarely at both sides, and his choice had no revision.

"After a lapse of six years, during which Mr. Burns had proved his devotion to the mission work in Fokien and Kiangsu by travelling and preaching, he and I arrived in Amoy the same day, he from Fuh-chow in April, 1862.

"Travel and exposure had made their marks on him, but he was still vigorous, and was projecting new trips in the surrounding country, then opening more than ever to the preaching of the gospel; and I was glad to hear how the work had progressed since the day he told me the story about Pechuia, eight years before, on board the *Powhatan*. I took a review of the twenty years which had elapsed since Dr. Abeel and Bishop Boone left Macao, in February, 1842, to begin a mission at Amoy, where the latter buried his admirable wife, and the former laboured on in faith and patience until others came to his help, and others to theirs, until we now see a Christian community preparing to take its place as an acknowledged fact in Chinese society. In laying the foundations of this blessed superstructure, few have done more to the glory of God than William Burns.

"The purpose for which he came to Peking in 1864, to endeavour to obtain the same recognition of the civil rights of Protestants that the Roman Catholics had, was not attained in the manner he wished; but his mission was not fruitless. He made known the condition of the missions in Fokien province to the late Sir Frederick Bruce, and gave him a juster perception of the mode of carrying on missionary work than he had before, and the nature of the disabilities under which the converts then laboured. Sir Frederick declared that Mr. Burns was one of the most fascinating men in representing a case that he had ever met, and gave one a clear idea of whatever he undertook to describe.

"The daily routine of the life he led in Peking for three years was very uniform. He dwelt by himself in one room, his own servant occupying the next, and almost every day visited one or other of the mission chapels connected with the four missions in the city. The version of the second part of the *Pilgrim's Progress* is likely to be the most permanent of his literary labours in the northern dialect; for his *Peep of Day* and the version of the Psalms in tetrameters[1] are less acceptable to native taste. He visited frequently at the houses of his friends, who were always cheered by his presence, and towards the last part of his stay he gave all his strength to preaching the gospel to such audiences as were gathered in the chapels."

In another letter Dr. Williams adds:—

"In Peking I saw more of him than previously, and enjoyed his visits at my house greatly; he was particularly interested in the progress, causes, and conduct of the slavery war in the United States, and kept up a minute acquaintance with its events, studying the geography of the seats of war, the character of the principal leaders and generals, and the changes of public sentiment as the war developed more and more the detestable nature of the bondage of the slave."

---

[1] *Scottice*, long measure.

To another valued friend and true yoke-fellow in the work of Christ, the Rev. Joseph Edkins, M.A., of the London Missionary Society, I am indebted for the following graphic and touching memorials, which will form a fitting sequel to Dr. Williams' narrative, and give to us a still more distinct idea of the nature of his work, and of his manner of life, during those quiet and comparatively uneventful years—the land of Beulah of a life which had had in full measure its Hills of Difficulty, its combats with Apollyon, and its solemn witnessings in Vanity Fair, as well as blessed glimpses of the Celestial City from the heights of the Delectable Hills:—

"The Rev. W. C. Burns came to Peking in 1863, and at once opened to Sir Frederick Bruce the matter to attempt the settlement of which he had come. He went to stay with Rev. W. H. Collins (C.M.S.), who met him as he entered the city gate, and at once claimed him as a guest. It was not his object, however, to live with any of the mission families. He wished a house for himself. A small house with a little self-contained court was rented for him at 2*s.* 6*d.* a month. Here he lived for four years. This house had a south exposure. On the west was Mr. Burns' room, with its two chairs, table, and khang. This last, used through all the north of China, is a brick structure at one end of the room, permeated by a winding flue, and when required can be heated from the front through an opening partly in the floor, and partly in the brick khang. On the east side was the servant's room, used also as kitchen. One servant was sufficient to buy, to cook, and to keep the house. When the servant went out, Mr. Burns stayed at home. This simplicity of living was happiness to our lost friend. He enjoyed quietness, and the luxury of having few things to take care of. He delighted to live on little, that he might have more to give to the cause of God. He was a generous friend to the poor, to hospitals, to various mission schemes.

"In the summer, according to Peking custom, he had an awning of reed-mats extended over his court. This, in north China, greatly helps the people to pass the summer in comfort.

In the evening the mats of the awning are drawn open sufficiently to admit the night air. We have a hot short summer, at an average of 90°, as we have a cold winter averaging 15°, when the ice never thaws till the opening of spring, but remains a foot thick through the season. Our friend had a small clay stove lit for the season. Here he sat summer and winter with his teacher, engaged for a good part of each year in hymn-making and translation.

"His first work in Peking was a volume of hymns, about fifty in number. These were chiefly translations from home hymns, or hymns used in the south of China rehabilitated in the mandarin dialect. When he had printed this collection, he undertook a translation of the *Peep of Day* in fifty chapters. This work is in the Peking dialect.

"The *Pilgrim's Progress* was his next work. Formerly at Amoy he had translated this book in a simple style. He now resolved to render it again into Chinese, adopting the dialect of Peking. The first and second parts are complete in two thick volumes. Some of the copies are illustrated with wood-cuts. Some additions are found to the text in the second part, where an attempt has been made to increase the usefulness of the work to native women by showing the principles that should rule in Christian marriage.

"Immediately after the completion of this work, he commenced a translation of the Psalms from the Hebrew. It was published in the spring of 1867, a year before his death. It is composed in four-word sentences throughout, so as to assume a regular appearance of symmetry; but this advantage has been gained at the expense of smoothness. To each psalm there is an introduction stating the argument. There are also many text-references to the New Testament and other parts of Scripture. These additions add much to the value of the book.

"While engaged constantly in these literary enterprises, Mr. Burns never intermitted preaching when not physically incapacitated for it. He preached much at the chapel of the London Mission hospital, within two or three minutes' walk of his residence. His assistance here was annually recognized by Dr. Dudgeon in the printed report. He preached also very frequently at a chapel of Dr. Martin's outside of the east gate, and at another more than a mile north of the London Mission hospital, belonging to the American Board. He also officiated occasionally at Mr. Collins' chapel, belonging to the Church Missionary Society, on the west side of the city. His services at all these places were very acceptable, and given with the greatest good-will and the most catholic spirit: he thus aimed at the glory of Christ independently of his particular denomination, and was in this respect an example worthy of imitation, for the maintenance of sectarian distinctions in China may be regarded as almost unnecessary. The truth that we are all one in Christ Jesus may well unite missionaries of different communions in heart and practice. Whenever the Church of Christ in China becomes strong enough to be separated from the British and American missionary organizations, it will be advisable for them to unite in one church system of their own, framed in a manner consonant with Scripture; but adapted for China, and not modelled after any of the existing sects of Western Christendom. With this theory Mr. Burns' *practice* well agreed. He was at home with all Protestant Christians, and was greatly loved by all his brethren. His manly character, his sober views, his practical good sense, his kindly sociality, his mental strength, his moral decision, and his consistent and unaffected piety made him a friend greatly valued by us all. We enjoyed his coming to sit in the evenings, to share with us in his simple abstemious way at the social meal, to unite with us in family worship, or to join in the exercises of the week-evening prayer-meeting. He frequently preached in English at the Sunday evening service, held for the benefit of the mission families, and was always welcomed as one whose sermons were invariably characterized by solidity and faithfulness. He impressed his auditors with the fact, that he was a man of power and devotedness, a man whose atmosphere was prayer, and whose daily food was Scripture.

"With his large-hearted kindness, and great willingness to do evangelistic work whenever and wherever there was an opening, he went no fewer than four times on journeys connected with the country work of the London Mission at Peking. The first occasion was to Shen-cheu, a city south-south-west of Peking, and distant 170 miles. He went in response to an invitation from the people, who wished a preacher to come and tell them the gospel. He stayed there about three weeks, and when he left thought that at least two of the natives were suitable for baptism. The Bible distributor who was with him thought there were four. Mr. Burns was very cautious in giving an opinion with regard to the fitness of applicants for baptism. His habit was to be stern in requiring decided sacrifices on the part of the inquirer, such as should constitute indubitable proof of his sincerity. It was perhaps this feeling which prevented his ever baptizing converts. He left that for other missionaries to do, claiming on all occasions, as an evangelist and not a pastor, the privilege of exemption from responsibility."

In the autumn of 1867, he left Peking, urged forward as usual by the necessity that he ever felt laid upon him, of withdrawing from a field which was comparatively well occupied and cared for, and proceeding to others more neglected. His life at Peking had been peculiarly pleasant to him, and his friends and his work congenial; but he was all the more prepared to hear the voice that summoned him to a sterner and more self-denying service elsewhere. For the following account of the circumstances of his departure, and of his journey to Nieu-chwang, I am again indebted to Mr. Edkins' graphic pen:—

"Wang-hwan, who was baptized by me in Peking four years ago, is a native of a village about thirty miles from Peking, and six miles from Tsai-yü, where at that time the London Mission had a chapel. He heard Mr. Burns occasionally at Tsai-yü, and was afterwards brought to decision for the gospel in connection with the work of one of our catechists, for a time in charge at the chapel at Tsai-yü, and who is now dead. Wang-hwan became a changed man, and after his baptism in the hospital chapel, Peking, appeared to his neighbours a very different person from what he once was. They saw in him a man peaceable and well-behaved, whereas he had once been the opposite.

"Mr. Burns took him with him after much consideration, and was influenced more by satisfactory evidence of deep interest in religion and a love for prayer, than by any ability that he showed. He had had the education of a small country farmer, that is three or four years' schooling, just enough to enable him to transact ordinary business. Since that time he has improved himself. When Mr. Burns left Peking for Tientsin, in the autumn of 1867, it was still an open question whether he would go to Nieu-chwang or to Shantung. I had been laying before him a request from Shantung from several persons for a preacher. If he had gone there he would have passed through the villages where the Methodist New Connexion Mission and our own are situated, and his experience in manifestations of the spiritual life both in Christian countries and in China would have rendered his testimony to the character of these Christians one of great value.

"But his sense of duty and his knowledge of the need of a missionary at Nieu-chwang, led him there in preference. The captain of the native junk in which he went would take no money from him for the passage. This was on account of his character, and that of the catechist. Going not for trade but to do good, it appeared to this heathen sailor unreasonable to accept payment of passage money. Arrived at Nieu-chwang they began to seek a house, and found one at last in the outskirts. Here they became domiciled, and public and private services were daily held. Many persons attended, and the hearts of our departed brother and of the catechist were cheered.

"On Sundays Mr. Burns performed worship in English at the consulate as long as his health allowed."

Of the general course of his life and labours during the few remaining days of his earthly ministry, the following brief recollections of the mate of a trading vessel which happened at that time to touch at the port of Nieu-chwang, afford an interesting and life-like glimpse:—

"In October, 1867," says this Christian seaman, in a communication printed in the *Sunday at Home*, "I left Che-foo, in the barque *Lady Alice*, for Nieu-chwang, where we arrived about the 6th. I had learned from the missionaries at Che-foo that a missionary of the name of Burns was at Nieu-chwang. The first Lord's-day after arrival our captain and second mate went on shore to the British consul's office. This was the only place for worship at Nieu-chwang, except the meeting on board our vessel. It being the second mate's turn on shore, I told him if the minister was dressed like a Chinaman, to introduce himself to him, and deliver a message for me. On his return at dinner-time I was much cheered and delighted to hear that it was Mr. Burns that held the service, and that the service was no formal ceremony, nor with enticing words of man's wisdom, but very earnest and very faithful, warning them to attend to the salvation of their souls, and commending godliness as profitable in all things. After the service my friend carried out my wishes, and met a hearty welcome from Mr. Burns, who was himself cheered at hearing there were some belonging to our ship professing to be the ransomed of the Lord, and trying in some feeble way to acknowledge him and commend him to others.

"He sent me an invitation to come and see him on a certain day of the week, I forget now which day. His Chinese servant was to meet me on my landing, and conduct me to him. I landed at the appointed time, and was conducted accordingly to the missionary I had never seen. I shall not soon forget it, for we seemed to meet as friends that had been acquainted for a long time. I felt perfectly at home with him. Mr. Burns walked up and down the yard of his house arm-in-arm with me, and talked to me as a friend, brother, or father, in the most kind and familiar manner. As iron sharpeneth iron, so did the countenance of a man his friend that day.

"He told about how the Lord had guided him to that place (Nieu-chwang). He had many friends, he said, where he had been staying for four years before, and was very comfortable; but he wanted to come to Nieu-chwang because there was no one labouring there. He said we must not study comfort: they that go to the front of the battle get the blessing; the skulkers get no blessing. I have often thought of that since, for indeed it was a word in season to me at the time. He told me how he arrived there in a junk, or native vessel, and how kind they were to him, and how he had been guided to the house he was then living in. He spoke as seeing the dealing of God in his providence in all his ways. . . .

"It was a very happy time, I think, to both—a time of refreshing. I did not stay late, as I had some mile and a half to walk. The Chinaman again conducted me back. We started with the understanding that Mr. Burns was to visit our ship, I think the next evening; so when I got on board I obtained permission from the captain for us to hold a meeting in the cabin. I hoisted my Bethel flag in the afternoon, and when our friend came on board we told him we had the royal standard flying, 'for I suppose you belong to the royal family.' He took tea with me and the second mate (the captain was on shore), and in the evening, when all the crew were with us, he gave an address about the Saviour and the woman of Samaria. There was one illustration I remember which shows his homely and forcible way of putting things. He compared the woman of Samaria to a fish with the hook in its mouth, twisting about, trying to get loose; but the more it tried to clear itself the firmer hold the hook got of it. The whole of the address was very interesting and very earnest, and was well received.

"After he had done, he requested one of us to engage in prayer. Our cook, a black man, by the name of Cæsar, offered a very earnest prayer. It was, indeed, pleasant, in this dry and barren land, thus, for a short time, to dwell together in unity. After our meeting was ended not one offered to move; and our dear friend, sitting at the head of the table, told us about his travels in China, and of his being taken prisoner with two Chinese converts, and sent through the country, with many other things which are probably well known. Thus our time soon flew away, till the parting had to take place. Our cook had a set of Wesleyan hymn-books, which we used for worship. He sent Mr. Burns one, with which he was very pleased, and talked of translating it into the Chinese language. This was one of the happiest evenings of our voyage. . . . He spoke to me very affectionately about his mother, and most of his affairs. When the time drew near for us to part he handed me the Bible and bade me read something. I read the 103 Psalm, and could not help (nor need I try to) giving vent to my feelings while reading it, there seemed such a blessing flowing from it. It was like the river whose streams make glad the city of God. I think we could set to our seal that the word of God is true. After we had prayed, Mr. Burns said, 'The Lord is nigh to all that call upon him;' and we both joined in saying, 'to all that call upon him in truth.' . . .

"When parting I spoke to him of his kindness, and the great honour I had received from him, when he put his arms around me, and said, 'Don't mention it, don't mention it! Our meeting is providential.' Thus we parted. The Chinaman again conducted me back in the beautiful still moonlight. I cannot attempt to describe the sweet and blessed meditation I had while returning to my ship. I have thus simply spoken of my meeting, intercourse, and parting with a blessed man of God, the remembrance of which is still dear and sweet to me. I have good reasons to look back to this time, and praise that God who has been so merciful to me in all my wanderings. Mr. Burns was a saving shield to me in God's providence at that place, and as an angel of the Lord.

'Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love.'

'By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye love one another; and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him that is begotten of him.' Mr. Burns was an Israelite indeed. . . .

"He then seemed," wrote Cæsar the black cook in a postscript to the above, "to me to have been well advanced in years. Nevertheless he moved about and spoke the Word of Life as brisk as can be expected from a man of thirty years of age. He said we all wanted stirring up; and so he did stir us up on board of the ship, for he made a lasting impression on my mind. He spoke freely and boldly about the changes pertaining to that world which is to come. He put me in mind of one who had already gone through his refining process. He appeared then to be ripe for glory, if we may use the term, and I feel sure that he is 'gone home' to the city of the living God, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, who was waiting, no doubt, to welcome his ransomed and faithful one. He gave me the *Pilgrim's Progress* that he translated while he was out there, from English into the Chinese language. His last words to me were, 'Pray for me.' He also wrote the words down on the book he gave me, so that I should not forget. Last night, unknowingly,[1] I prayed for him for the last time. So now my prayers cease from last night, and turn to praise; and I shall expect to meet him face to face."

On the 21st November, he wrote the following lines, breathing his usual cheerful and happy spirit, to his valued colleague, Mr. Douglas, one of the last letters of any length he ever wrote on earth:—

"*Nieu-chwang*, *November* 21*st*, 1867.—DEAR MR. DOUGLAS,—Your letter of August 31st reached me this P.M. per steamer *Manchu*, and as she is the last vessel for this season, I hasten to send a few lines by her to Shanghae. Many thanks for the life-like photograph of yourself which you have sent me. You are more like the man that you were intended to be *with* than *without* the 'beard.' May it please God in his mercy long to preserve you in the health and vigour which you seemed to have enjoyed when the likeness was taken, and may your soul 'prosper and be in health,' even as the body 'prospers!' . . . It seems to me that no place more suitable (or perhaps so suitable) could be recommended to the Irish Presbyterians than *Nieu-chwang*, and Manchuria beyond, a vast, open, and unoccupied field, with a fine climate, and a population comparatively well off in a worldly point of view. In writing home I have already made this suggestion, and I hope that on consideration you will see your way to second my proposal. If the Irish were here, would this not be a fine place to come to from the south for a change of air? and you yourself, when needing such a change, would enjoy the opportunity of using and increasing your Mandarin. Mr. Cowie, too, would be only sent back to his *Che-foo* dialect, a great part of the people in this town being from that quarter. You can have no idea of the extent of the trade that is carried on here in grain and oil, as well as bean-cake, furs, &c., &c. I shall only mention what was told me by a gentleman connected with the imperial customs, viz.: that two years ago it was estimated that during one winter 80,000 carts came to this place from the interior laden with grain and oil. It is common for from 500 to 1000 to come in on a single day during the winter months; and throughout all the region which furnishes this supply, including the provinces of the *Amour* and *Kirin*, as well as the province of *Kwan-tung*, pure Mandarin is universally spoken. Mr. Meadows is now absent on a three months' journey to the north and east, passing through the centre of these three provinces. Romish priests are found here and there, but the only representative of the Protestant churches is my solitary self! . . . As to the repairs at Pechuia, I shall be glad that you put me down, say, for the sum of £20 sterling, but it will be the end of February before I can furnish you with an order on our treasurer for that amount, my accounts for the year being already made up. I am rejoiced to hear that while man is repairing the chapel, God himself is again graciously putting forth his hand to repair the spiritual walls of that little church. May backsliders return to their first love, as well as additions be made to the church of 'such as shall be saved!' Who was that young man—an assistant of Dr. Maxwell's—who was lost in the Formosa Channel? Not, I hope, the young man from *Chióh-bey*, who was afterwards chapel-keeper at Sinkoeya? I must now conclude, as it is getting late. Pray for us, and commend us to the prayers of the churches. I should have mentioned that Mr. Williamson of Che-foo, who was lately here, left a native assistant to sell books here during the winter. He and the man who came with me from Peking occupy themselves in this work in the principal street, preaching at the same time to the people. I join them generally during a part of the time, and the opportunity is a valuable one, especially as our house is too retired for collecting passers-by. A separate house we thought we had got for preaching was at last held back, and is now an opium-smoking den! Christian love to all the brethren. Yours affectionately,—WM. C. BURNS."

---

[1] Not knowing of his death.

The following letter, which came to me altogether unsought, just as I was approaching this part of my task, will tell almost all that now remains to be said, and in terms than which the fondest affection could have desired nothing more loving or tender:—

"*Nieu-chwang*, 6*th July*, 1869.—MY DEAR SIR,—When in conversation with an intimate friend of your late brother the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, I related the particulars of my last interview with him, which occurred a few days before his death; and as far as I know, the last hour when he was in full possession of his faculties. I was then informed that you were gradually collecting material for a book which should illustrate his missionary labours in China, and was pressed to repeat to you what I knew of his closing life. This is difficult to do in a letter; it is difficult to express in writing what I might so easily relate to you by word of mouth, without entering rather at length into his previous life, *i.e.* at this port. As you are aware, it was in August, 1867, that he arrived at Nieu-chwang; for the purpose, as he then said, of seeing what could be done toward establishing a mission in the province of Manchuria. He was accompanied by a native Christian of Peking to assist him in his labours. With them they brought only their personal clothing, and Bibles and books for distribution. I had never seen your brother before; but at my first interview was impressed with the earnest simplicity of his manner, and the cheerfulness which I afterwards noticed he at all times carried with him. A few days after this I went to visit him in the native town at a small inn where he was then staying. I found him lying down in a very small apartment, which was destitute of every comfort. He was ill, but arose to meet me. He would allow no expressions of pity for the want of these comforts, and soon made me forget them in listening to the history of his labours at Peking, while making translations of various works. I was from that moment very fully impressed with the genuineness of the love which had actuated his motives in devoting his life to the work of a missionary. A little later on he had found a house wherein to begin his labours. His days were spent in preaching to the inhabitants in the streets, distributing and selling books. Sundays, he preached to the foreigners in the foreign settlement in the forenoon; and in the afternoon to the natives at his house, which for all intents and purposes was recognized as the Christian chapel. It was delightful to see how faithfully he performed his duties,—how on every Sabbath morning he appeared in our settlement punctual to the hour, having to come nearly two miles through the heat, and through the cold, and often to encounter the bad roads of the country. By his kindly manner, his spotless reputation, his Christian earnestness, he drew a goodly number to listen to him. As he talked on, his face became all alive with the deep faith he had in the truths he endeavoured to communicate; and his face often and often became radiant with a light, revealing the love which warmed him into eloquence. He seemed to possess a zeal which might have belonged to the earlier days, when apostles went forth so fearless and with so much love. One could not but observe this peculiar power which he possessed. For a moment he would speak with great force, and then change to tones of gentleness which were as impressive as they were child-like in their utterance. All this and far more you must know. Observing these characteristics, led me to have confidence in the impressions he was likely to give to the natives. Even in the short time he spent among them here, a few learned to inquire into the Christian doctrines.

"Early in January he was taken ill with a cold which brought on fever, from which he never recovered. For weeks and months he lingered in helpless weakness. I went to see him often. One day he said, 'I have been thinking that perhaps this is to be my last illness.' From that time he frequently told me of his hopes and his fears. As he lay upon his bed, he thought out his plans for the future, and his sole desire to live seemed to be that he might labour to carry them out for the good of those he had come among. For a long time he would insist upon his assistant preaching in the next room, that he might listen. And nearly up to the time of his death, he would have him and his servant —who by-the-by was becoming a Christian through his teaching —conduct the morning and evening prayers by his bedside. When he spoke of life, he said what he himself would do. When he spoke of death, he prayed that others might be found to continue the work he had begun. When talking of either he was equally resigned—always cheerful, always happy. If he had fears at all, they must have appertained more to the things of this world than to the other. And in preparing for this he was preparing for the other. You know how he arranged for the support of his native assistant after his death, and until such a time as a foreigner should arrive. I will not therefore repeat.

"And now I come to speak of the last hours. One evening about six o'clock, I went to see him. I found him suffering from hard and difficult breathing, and I felt that death was near. So I sat by him and talked of the hour which was coming—of the life which was beyond. In reply to my inquiry whether there was anything I could do for him after he was gone, he said, 'No, I have arranged everything; all I have to ask is that you will keep your promise in regard to my wishes for this mission.' I began to repeat to him familiar passages from the Scriptures, in which he joined as often as his strength would allow; he would listen until I came to the lines which he loved the most, when he would say them aloud, his voice though very low, yet singularly deep. When I began the psalm, 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' a beautiful smile broke over his countenance and he pressed my hand more firmly; and his voice assumed, with all its weakness, something of the old depth as we came to the words, 'Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil.' When with much fervour he had repeated the Lord's Prayer, we sat in silence. He assured me he was very happy. And thus he died, as it were, among the people with whom he had cast his lot; indeed we might almost say among the very scenes with which he had identified his life. One who could have watched his declining days when he naturally, more or less, gave expression to his views, would have marked with interest the contrast between the mind and thoughts so trained to higher themes, and the heart so contented with lowly things.

The little room in which he died had but few comforts, certainly no luxuries. The form on which he slept, a table, two chairs, two book-cases, and an open-grate, foreign stove made up the furniture. The light came into the room through a large paper window. But I shall long remember the solemn hour which I have endeavoured to describe to you. The assistant sat at his feet weeping, now and then raising his eyes upward in silent prayer, and the servant on one side watching with tenderness his wants. And these two simple-minded natives, judging from their life and sayings since, must have profited by his last injunctions. And so after the years of toil he passed away into the other world. 'God,' he said, 'will carry on the good work.' 'Ah! no, I have no fears for that.'

"It was a rare privilege to have known your brother. His firmness of purpose was remarkable; his Christian faith supporting to himself, as well as encouraging to others; his gentleness most touching; his happiness genuine. And to me these incidents which I have related contain more than I am able to express."

One or two further touches from like loving hands will complete the picture of this calm and radiant sun-setting. The following reminiscences of his humble native assistant, Wang-hwang, have been kindly furnished to me by Mr. Edkins, who took them down from his own lips:—

"While he was here," says Mr. Edkins, in continuation of the notes already quoted, "I questioned him about Mr. Burns' last words of testimony to the gospel, in the service of which he lived and died. What he said is here appended. 'It was the 28th day of the 7th (Chinese) month when we arived, and we were five days waiting at Takoo (the port at the mouth of the Tientsin river). While there we went daily from our boat to preach in the streets. When we went on board the junk, the captain declined to attend our services; but on the third day he and the two cooks joined us. When Mr. Burns offered him passage-money, the captain said, 'I know you are not going to seek gain, for in that case you would certainly travel by steamer, or by a foreign sailing vessel.' He belongs to a fishing village called Tien-kia-tsui, a few miles north of Takoo on the coast.

"'We went on well till the 16th day of the 12th month. On this day Mr. Burns was taken ill, and lay for ninety-four days, when his spirit fled. He had felt pleasure in preaching that day. Many foreigners were present, which rejoiced him. When he came back from the English service, and saw sixty or seventy Chinese pressing in to hear, he said, 'I will preach to them.' He preached for two hours. After this he felt no appetite, took no food, and lay down weary. About eleven o'clock P.M. he waked shaking with cold. For twenty days after this he did not leave the house. When prayer time came, he said, 'Come to my bedside, I will still preach to you.' So the little band of inquirers gathered with Wang-hwan round the sick missionary, for whom it was appointed that he should soon go home.

"'When his illness became severe, he made me promise that I would stay at Nieu-chwang. When we left Peking he was afraid, he told me, lest he should take the wrong man, a man different in mind and aim to himself. I said I would certainly stay at Nieu-chwang and carry out his injunctions. 'But,' he said, 'you have no strength or learning, and you must therefore be the more careful to be right, and to do what is right, so as to secure favour from God and approval from man. You must pray much for aid.'

"'One time when his sickness was severe he lay as if asleep, when in a moment I heard him talking. I asked him what he was saying. He replied, 'Ah! did you hear? I was saying over the 121st Psalm. I was speaking with God, not with you.'

"'Another time he laughed. I asked him why? He said, 'God was speaking with me, and this made my heart glad.'

"'Two days later, he said to me, 'God tells me to go. I have some things to say to you. As to my burial, I wish to have no new clothes bought, but to be buried in these.' (Referring to his Chinese clothing. The custom of the country is to buy a new suit, and lay the deceased in his coffin with complete dress as if living. It is quite a common thing to draw on the new clothing some hours before the death takes place.) He further said, 'Do not let the funeral be on Sunday. At the burial read 1 Cor. 15th chapter. Pray with the inquirers. Tell them to be sure to come and see me again in the place to which I am going. Do not weep after my death. Do not pray for me, but pray for the living. Diligently pray, and God will certainly send you a missionary.'

"'At another time, when he was a little better, a letter came from his mother. It said, 'Do not think of me, but of your work.' He told me what his mother said, and her words rejoiced him greatly. He added, 'She says I am a knife that must be worn out by cutting, not by rusting.' He wished it might be so. He also said, 'I am one of four brothers' (or 'I have four brothers'), 'one of them I would wish to exhort, but I shall not now have the opportunity. I hope others may do so.'

"'He urged me to believe as he did, pray as he did, read diligently as he did, and use my mind as he did, 'and,' said he, 'God will help you to preach.'

"'If you are reproached, bear it patiently. To be patient is to glorify God. I was not sorry when in the south the time of suffering came, nor should you be. Think of what some missionaries have had to suffer, and such things should rather be rejoiced in as proof of God's care.

"'You can be my substitute when the new missionaries come. I cannot be here to receive them. You can do so, and must act for me. You must have the same heart as I have.

"'I felt in Peking that my work there was done. It was a trial to leave friends. Yet for the gospel I could not but go. We shall meet again in heaven; and think of the knife. You must be one of God's knives.

"'If there are inquirers, you must be careful to lead them in the right path, remembering that you are yourself not very strong nor learned. Take care to be diligent. Be indulgent to inquirers, exhort them much, and be very mindful of the example you set them, lest you should dishonour your Saviour, and cause sorrow to your pastor and friends. Always think of this.

"'I am very happy. I do not fear death. After death there is unspeakable happiness to be hoped for. Do not think I am sad at the thought of dying. I am not at all so. God's promises are true, and I fear not. My work has been little, but I have not knowingly disobeyed God's commands.'

"'The inquirers, five or six in number, went in to see him. He said, 'You see in me proof that the Christian doctrine is true. I am well supported now, and this strength which is given me, not to shrink at the approach of death, you can take as proof that what I believe is true; my illness, my decaying body, are also a testimony to the truth of the Bible. When I am gone you will have no missionary here. You must therefore pray much and think and read much that you may understand well. I have left friends and home to come here for the sake of this gospel that now supports me. I rely on God now. Listen you to him, and let us resolve all to meet in heaven. Hope for this. Live for this.'"

It was in the midst of this "time of languishing," and when the shadows of the great night began visibly to close around him, that he wrote in his own hand, still clear and strong as of old, the following touching lines to his mother—embodying his last solemn testimony in behalf of Christ, and of that great cause to which he had devoted his life:—

"TO MY MOTHER.

"At the end of last year I got a severe chill which has not yet left the system, producing chilliness and fever every night, and for the last two nights this has been followed by perspiration, which rapidly diminishes the strength. Unless it should please God to rebuke the disease, it is evident what the end must soon be, and I write these lines beforehand to say that I am happy, and ready through the abounding grace of God either to live or to die. May the God of all consolation comfort you when the tidings of my decease shall reach you, and through the redeeming blood of JESUS may we meet with joy before the throne above!—WM. C. BURNS.

"*Nieu-chwang*, *Jan.* 15*th*, 1868.

"P.S.—Dr. Watson is very kind, and does everything in his power for my recovery."

To this is attached on a small fragment of Chinese paper, also in his own hand—a list of the texts on which he had preached at Nieu-chwang, from a tender feeling obviously that she to whom he wrote would like to see it. Perhaps there are other eyes that may linger over the lines with mournful interest. It will be observed that the first two Sabbaths are blank, in consequence of the suffering and enfeebled state in which he arrived from Peking.

“TEXTS PREACHED ON AT NIEU-CHWANG.

Sept. 1st,	No meeting.
Sept. 8th,	No meeting.
Sept. 15th,	John iii. 16.
Sept. 22d,	John xv. 14.
Sept. 29th,	Gal. v. 16.
Oct. 6th,	Mat. v. 3–12.
Oct. 13th,	John vi. 27.
Oct. 20th,	Luke xviii. 1–14.
Oct. 27th,	Luke xix. 1–10.
Nov. 3d, Mr Williamson,	John iv. 14.
Nov. 10th,	Mat. xxv. 1–13.
Nov. 17th,	John i. 29.
Nov. 24th,	Isaiah lv. 6, 7.
Dec. 1st,	Luke xv. (a good day).
Dec. 8th,	Luke xviii. 18–23.
Dec. 15th,	James iv. 7, 8.
Dec. 22d,	Rom. iii. 20–22.
Dec. 29th,	Rev. xx. 11–15.”

Thus his last public testimony was to the same great truth of which he had witnessed so powerfully on the streets of Newcastle twenty-seven years before, and the overwhelming conviction of which had so often imparted an almost preternatural terribleness and grandeur to his words.

The tide of life now gently ebbed away. He spoke little even on those subjects that were dearest to him, lying for long days and nights in silence that was broken only by the soft footsteps of his Chinese assistant, and by the voices of the worshippers from time to time in the neighbouring room, in which it was his delight to know that his loved work was still carried on. His peace was calm and deep, but undemonstrative—like that of the river which speaks only by its silence and by the soft whispering of the reeds and lapping of the waters on its banks. "He did not speak much," wrote the Rev. A. Williamson, "on religious subjects either to Chinese or foreigners; and when he did, the burden of his remarks was that he was prepared to die or to live as the Lord might determine." "About a month after the commencement of his illness," says another friend who often visited him at this time, "he began to apprehend its fatal issue, but said he was quite prepared. After six weeks or so, his fresh looks began to leave him. The brightness of his eye faded, and gradually he became like an old decaying man." Yet now and then the old fire would for a moment awake, and impart an expiring energy alike to his voice and his frame. "Finding a decided change for the worse, and great distress in breathing, the gentleman just referred to repeated several portions of Scripture, among others Psalm xxiii. Hesitating at the words, 'Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,' Mr. Burns took it up, and in a deep strong voice continued and finished the psalm. He also greatly relished John xiv., 'Let not your heart be troubled,' and on closing the exercise with the Lord's Prayer Mr. Burns suddenly became emphatic, and repeated the latter portion and doxology, 'FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY,' with extraordinary power and decision. This was the last time he manifested any power of mind. Afterwards he only evinced recognition, and at last hardly spoke or even opened his eyes. Thus he passed away."

This is the last glimpse we have of him ere he passes out of sight. On the afternoon of the day on which he died, the kind doctor who had so tenderly watched over him throughout, hearing that he was worse, hastened, in company with the consular assistant, to his bedside, but just too late to see him die, though the heart and pulse were still beating when they arrived.

He was buried in the foreign graveyard, according to the simples rites of the Presbyterian Church, Dr. Watson, according to his own express desire, reading those grand words in 1 Cor. xv. 42–57: "So also is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory," &c.

It was a dreary and desolate place, and the river was fast washing it away, but Dr. Watson informs me in his last letter that the precious dust has been since removed to a piece of ground recently purchased by the foreign residents for a cemetery. "We hope," says he, "to make our new burying-ground somewhat like such a place at home, where occasionally we may walk, and call back to memory the lives of those we loved." There the place of his grave is marked, according to the terms of his will, by a modest head-stone, bearing the following simple legend:—

TO THE MEMORY
OF THE
REV. WILLIAM C. BURNS, A.M.,
MISSIONARY TO THE CHINESE,
From the Presbyterian Church in England.
Born at Dun, Scotland, April 1st, 1815.
Arrived in China, November 1847.
Died at Port of Nieu-chwang,
4th April, 1868.
II. CORINTHIANS, CHAP. V.

His beloved colleague Mr. Douglas, who, on hearing of the critical nature of his illness, had hastened from Amoy, that he might minister to him in his time of need, found on his arrival that he had already—two months before—passed away, leaving behind him a general sentiment of deep and reverential sorrow both among the European and native residents, conspicuous among whom was his faithful assistant Wang, who still wore the hair of his head and beard unshaven, after the manner of his people in their deepest mourning for a father or a mother.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

"So your loved and honoured William," wrote the Rev. Dr. C. J. Brown to his mother, on hearing the tidings of his death, "has obtained the fulfilment of Christ's prayer, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' I am confident that amid the sorrow of your great loss, you are enabled to give thanks and say, 'It is the Lord:' 'It is well.' He makes no mistake as to the time, or the place, or the way of removing his servants to be with himself. Your dear William's history has, in fact, been one so palpably stamped with the signatures of a divine leading, that it were unlawful to entertain a doubt that the Lord just saw his work *done*, and the time, for him, of the everlasting rest arrived. I confess that I was quite unprepared for the tidings. I had dreamed that there remained for William a time of coming home (necessitated of course by his serious illness); that you would have the happiness of embracing him once more; that we should all see again his grave benevolent countenance; and that the Church and the cause of China and her missions might be greatly benefited. But now that the Lord has given his own unerring decision, I think I can see things that go to reconcile me to it, even apart from its simple unerringness as given by *Him.* I am not sure that William would have taken kindly to going up and down this country and *talking*. China and its labours, far from the ear and eye of man, was his sphere. He had literally *buried* himself in that vast land—a noble, living burial! No doubt, also, his system was spent. He had done his work (not a *short* one, be it remembered) in such a manner that even *his* robust constitution was undermined. And so things have just reached their natural close."

Doubtless this is the true reading of the matter, so far as it *can* be read by us on this side the vail. If now I must speak more of the character and work of my beloved and lamented brother, it must still be in the words of others; and for this there are abundant materials in the numerous and most touching tributes to his noble life and precious labours which have spontaneously come from every side. Of these it is fitting that I should quote first the words of his esteemed colleague and friend, the Rev. W. S. Swanson, in a sermon preached at Amoy shortly after receiving the tidings of his death:—

"And now that his life has closed, so far as regards earth, it remains as a precious legacy to us who are left. In reviewing it, what shall we say were the main characteristics of this man? He was a thorough scholar, with a well-furnished and an active mind; he possessed in no ordinary degree a sound judgment, and a large amount of common sense; he was one of the ablest and most popular preachers of his day; he was a man of great energy, indomitable perseverance, and of ardent zeal. But not these properties severally, nor all combined, seem to me to be the reason to account for the power he possessed, the success that followed his public work, or the mark he has left behind him.

"In personal intercourse with him one thing struck me above all others—his prayerfulness; and herein I believe we get some insight into his remarkable success and power. No matter what he did, or had to do, whether of importance or of a nature you might call trivial, he made it a matter of prayer. This prayerfulness of his seems to me to be the outstanding feature of his Christian life and his missionary work.

"Another very marked feature of his character was his faithfulness. You never could mistake what he was, nor whose servant he considered himself to be. He believed, as we all do, that Christ and the world could not amalgamate; and he was faithful to his belief. And what was the result? The testimony of those who care little for Christ and the things of his kingdom is unanimous in this, that he was a faithful, earnest, and consistent Christian; and this testimony they never withheld. Agree or not with him as they might, they did not fail to perceive, and were not slow to acknowledge, the faithfulness of the man to the great Master he served. This faithfulness made him sometimes seem harsh, it may be, to some, and not so regardful as they might have wished him to be of the feelings of others. But this could be thought only by those who did not know him. He was very tender, and very chary of giving offence; but not so much so as to prevent him from denouncing where denunciation was needed, or rebuking where rebuke seemed to him to be required.

"There is one other point in his character to which I must refer, and then I have done. To many he seemed eccentric, and to some morose. He was neither. There might be some shadow of seeming evidence for the former; there was none for the latter. He set a high ideal before himself as the ideal of the Christian missionary; and he did not hesitate to adopt any mode of life, or to enter upon any course of action, that seemed to him to be necessary, or even beneficial, to the proper carrying on of the work he came to do. As I have said already, the motive from which he acted was always the same; and one hardly dared to blame him in matters of no importance whatever when this was known. And now when we look back on his history, we may perhaps be led to believe that even in regard to the mode and localities of his missionary life, he acted in the way which, in his case, and with his peculiar and most marked individuality, was calculated to be of most benefit."

The feature of his Christian life here first referred to, is so pre-eminently characteristic, that I am tempted to add the following words of another:—

"Above all," says an able writer in the *Sunday at Home*, "Mr. Burns was a man of prayer. No one could be long in his company without discovering that. All the week long 'he filled the fountains of his spirit with prayer,' and on Sabbath the full fountain gave forth its abundant treasures. There was a freshness, a simplicity, a scriptural force and directness in his prayers, that formed the best of all preparations for the discourse that was to follow. Out of doors, we have often felt, as we heard him preach, that the opening prayer of the service was like the ploughing up of the field, it so opened the heart, and quickened and informed the conscience; the sermon that followed was the sowing of the seed in the prepared soil; and the concluding prayer was like the after harrowing of the ground, fixing down the seed that had been sown."

To any one in the least degree acquainted with him, or who had come even for a day into casual contact with him, it would not have been needful to have said even this much in regard to that which was in truth so much a part of himself, as to be inseparable from his very idea. His whole life was literally a life of prayer, and his whole ministry a series of battles fought at the mercy-seat. A friend who was under the same roof with him the day before he began his labours in St. Peter's, tells me that after walking round the parish with one of the elders, whose guest he was, he shut himself up in his chamber, and was found long afterwards lying on his face in an agony of prayer—the source doubtless of the holy calm which so struck the hearers on the succeeding morning.[1] There is an entry in his journal, during the time of his residence in Edinburgh, which is perhaps too sacred to quote, but to which I cannot withhold a reference in this connection. He seems to have possessed a private key to the church of St. Luke's, and there we find him, at least on one occasion, "detained" a whole night in solitary prayer "before the Lord." Such incidents as these let us far into the secret of where his great strength lay.

The Rev. Dr. Talmage, of the American Board of Missions, who, along with his admirable and lamented colleague, Mr. Doty, knew him so well during his early labours at Amoy, adds one or two characteristic traits which his friends will delight to recognize:—

"He was," he says, "very careful of his health, avoiding unnecessary exposure, abstemious in his diet, and very particular in regard to his clothing, guarding against sudden changes of temperature. Although living by himself, he made it a rule to take tea, and spend a part or the whole of the evening of every day of the week, except one, with some one of the missionary families. We all enjoyed greatly, and felt profited by this social intercourse with him. . . . He also carefully watched the indications of Providence, expecting to be led in the right way. I may mention a fact to illustrate this. He had planned a visit with some of our native helpers to the island of Quemoy, situated on the north-east side of the entrance to Amoy harbour. The day appointed to go proved rainy; from this he gathered that he should go in some other direction. While meditating on this subject an inquirer from a village near Pechuia came to his room, and requested him to visit the region of his native place. This was forthwith decided on. On their way to the boat they were met by an elderly man, an inquirer, who, on learning in what direction they were going, told them that he had a son in business at the village of Pechuia, and invited them to go to his son's shop, who, he said, would give them a hearty welcome. Such were the leadings of Providence, by which the gospel was first carried to that region. The remarkable blessings which followed that visit are well known. . . .

---

[1] "I had the privilege of getting acquainted with him at the commencement of his ministry in St. Peter's, Dundee, while he resided at The Crescent, with Mr. P. H. Thoms; in whose family I had been resident governess for several years. The day after he came to us, Mr. Thoms took him out to show him the boundaries of the parish, and to see a few of the people in St. Peter's district. They returned in the evening. Mr. Burns went to his room, and whilst we waited for his coming down stairs to dinner, we heard a heavy groan. Thinking he had been taken ill, Mrs. Thoms ran up stairs, and found him lying on his face on the floor groaning before the Lord! He had gotten such an overwhelming sense of his responsibility for the souls of that people, that he could then think of nothing else. In his absence of mind, he had left his door partially open, which Mrs. Thoms shut; and we did not see him again till late in the evening, when he came for the family worship. His prayer then was one continued strain of self-loathing, and pleading for mercy through 'the blood of the Lamb of God.' It happened that his room was next to mine, and *all that night* I heard him still groaning in prayer!"

"His greatest power in preaching seemed to me to consist in the manner in which he quoted the Holy Scriptures. In this I do not think that I have ever heard him surpassed. Hence, in labouring among the Chinese, it was over the native Christians and inquirers that he exerted his greatest influence for good.

"On this account it seemed to some (perhaps to all) of us that his labours would have been still more efficient if he had remained longer, or had settled down permanently in some one district of country, instead of pursuing so desultory a course of labour. A man with his gifts, I should suppose, would be just adapted to a field of labour such as Amoy now is, where there are so many small churches and companies of inquirers scattered throughout the region, and where the good seed of the Word has been sown so widely. Such a field would have had more likeness to those fields in Scotland and Canada, where his labours had been so wonderfully blessed.

"I say *it seemed*, for knowing his earnestness in seeking the divine guidance, we dare not say that he did not obtain it.

"He was a great (not perhaps in the eyes of the world) and good man; but he regarded himself as having peculiarities, and did not think that others should adopt his plan of labour."

Of the style of his preaching at his best times, I cannot better speak than in the words of a writer already quoted:—

"His voice was clear, full, and of a great compass and power. By nearly constant use, indoors and out, its finer tones were roughened when we heard it; but, for all the purposes of an evangelist, it was one of the finest we have ever heard. In preaching he used no notes, had but little action, and no art. His power was solely, humanly speaking, from the weight, clearness, abundance, and vigour of his matter, and from the vivid force of his own feelings and convictions of the truth of what he was uttering. He believed, and therefore spoke. God was visible to him as he preached; and so he soon became visible also to at least some of his hearers. He used but few illustrations, and when he did use them they were short and telling. His style was firm, terse, Saxon, abounding in short sentences; and he was mighty in the Scriptures. Sometimes you would have thought, in listening to some of his solemn appeals, that you were hearing a new chapter of the Bible when first spoken by a living prophet. His manner was not only solemn, but preeminently solemnizing. Few—we might say none—that came to laugh remained long in the laughing mood. He was a man, whether in the pulpit or out of it, whom you might treat many ways, but you could nowhere, nowhen, laugh at him. And if you tried to argue with him, you came away, if victorious in your own eyes, at least thoroughly conscious that you had grappled with no despicable, no common adversary. He was ever calm, cool, self-possessed. Preaching one day in Montreal Mr. Burns was roughly handled by a Popish crowd, some of whom threw stones, by one of which Mr. Burns was cut in the face. A party of the 93d Highlanders heard of the fracas, and rushed to the rescue, headed by one Hector M'Pherson, now labouring as a missionary at St. Martin's, near Perth, and to whom the preaching of Mr. Burns had been blessed. To the earnest inquiry of the soldier, 'What's all this?' Mr. Burns quietly wiped off the blood, and with a smile said, 'Never mind; it's only a little wound received in the Master's service.'[1] If in preaching, indoors or out, he was in any way interrupted, he was never flurried, and knew well how to turn any interruption to his own advantage. A friend has often graphically repeated to the writer an instance illustrative of this. Once on a fine summer Sabbath evening, he was preaching to a vast crowd at the approach to a railway station. A tall man, slightly intoxicated, in the outer edge of the crowd was rudely interrupting, and interjecting occasional comments, exciting the risibility of those around him. Mr. Burns paused a moment, turned his eyes on the man: 'You are tall and strong; but you are not too tall for a coffin, nor too strong for the worms! You are tall and strong; but not too tall for the grave, nor too strong for death! You are tall and strong; but you will soon have to stand forth, one of the crowd, before the great white throne; and how will you face the Judge of the whole earth! Tall and strong as you are, you cannot be hid from God; the rocks and mountains will not cover you; his all-seeing eye is on you now!' This was spoken with a slow deliberation that made every word tell, not only on the man, but on the crowd. 'It was absolutely withering and terrible,' our informant used to say; the man was sobered in one moment. He seemed to bow himself down, as if to hide himself from that eye, and became at once the most attentive, and eager, and respectful listener the preacher had."

In regard to the manner of his outer life, no man ever held himself more absolutely loose to the world, and to the things that are in the world. Literally he deemed not that anything that he possessed was his own, save only that he might use it in the service of Christ and human souls. Scrupulously exact and methodical in the use of his means, and rigid in his economy as regarded himself, he was conspicuously bountiful and free-handed in the dispensation of them to others. His whole income, from the first day on which he had any income to the last, was thus spent, with the exception only of what was necessary to supply for himself the barest necessities of life, and an annual gift of love to his one surviving parent. He literally fulfilled his own ideal, as conveyed in words that have been often quoted:—"The happiest state of a Christian on earth seems to be this—that he should have *few wants*. If a man have Christ in his heart, and heaven before his eye, and only as much of temporal blessings as is just needful to carry him safely through life, then pain and sorrow have little to shoot at—such a man has very little to lose. To be in union with Him, who is the Shepherd of Israel, and to walk very near to Him who is a sun and shield—that comprehends all that a poor sinner requires to make him happy between this and heaven."

---

[1] This incident was mentioned before in Chapter X., but I give the extract unbroken for the sake of the additional trait here given.

How vividly do I remember the moment, a little more than a year ago, when the trunk which had come home from China containing nearly all of property that he left behind him in the world was opened, amid a group of young and wondering faces,—a few sheets of Chinese printed matter, a Chinese and an English Bible, an old writing-case, one or two small books, a Chinese lantern, a single Chinese dress, and the blue flag of the "Gospel Boat." "Surely," whispered one little one amid the awestruck silence, "surely he must have been *very* poor!" There was One, we felt, standing amongst us, though unseen, who for his sake had been poorer still.

Of the results of his work in the Chinese field it is difficult to speak. Undoubtedly his life there was far more powerful as an influence than as an agency. It was not so much by what he said, or by what he did, as by what he was, that he made his presence felt over so wide a surface of that vast land, and that "being dead, he yet speaketh." "I never expect to see his like again," says an esteemed missionary of another communion, who only knew him for a very short time. "We are all, as I believe, serving God in our divine vocations, with greater gladness, and more fervid zeal, from having communed with your brother in his heavenly walk and noble aspirations." "Know him, sir?" exclaimed another, with almost indignant surprise, when asked if he knew a brother missionary of the name of William Burns, "all China knows him; he is the holiest man alive." His life, in short, was "a sign" to all who came in contact with him, and in the face of a luxurious and self-indulgent age, of an absolute consecration of heart to God, which knew no reserves, flinched from no sacrifices, and in very deed counted all things loss for Christ. In fine, to use the words of the Rev. James Johnston, once his colleague in mission work, and since for many years the esteemed secretary of the Scottish Committee:—

"Reckoned by the number of conversions under his direct preaching, the results are small; measured by the effect of his personal influence, the results are great. From the nature of the work for which he was specially qualified, and to which he entirely gave himself—that of a pioneer or evangelist—he could not expect to reap the fruits himself. His work was to break up the ground and sow the seed, not to gather the harvest. No man in this age, so far as we know, has so entirely devoted himself to this self-denying work. Again and again has our departed brother laboured for years in some dark and unpromising field, and just when the first streak of dawn appeared on the horizon, he would leave another to enjoy the glorious sunrise, while he buried himself in some other region sunk in heathen darkness. Again and again have we seen him thus in prayers and tears sowing the precious seed, and as soon as he saw the green shoots appear above the dark soil, he would leave to others the arduous yet happy task of reaping the harvest, and begin again his appointed work in breaking up the fallow-ground. The full extent of his great life-work will not be known until that day when 'he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together.' The faith and patience of this devoted servant of God is an example to the Church, and to every labourer in the Lord's vineyard, teaching us not to live upon the stimulus of a present success, even in the conversion of souls. No man enjoyed so great success as he did, or thirsted for the salvation of sinners with more intense longing than he, yet have we seen him labouring for seven years, according to his own testimony, 'without seeing one soul brought to Christ;' yet labouring on only with increased diligence and prayer, until he saw, as he shortly did, the awakening at Pechuia, which reminded him of Kilsyth. His influence in this way has been extended over a larger field, and with his strongly marked individuality he left the impress of his character and piety wherever he went. Missionaries felt it, and blessed God for even a casual acquaintance with William Burns; converts felt it, and have been heard to say that they got their idea of what the Saviour was on earth from the holy calm and warm love, and earnest zeal of Mr. Burns' 'walk with God.' The converts in many parts of China, and their children, will remember his high type of piety. His many translations of Scripture and sacred books, like the *Pilgrim's Progress* and *Line upon Line*, will prove a rich legacy to the Church, and his psalms and hymns in different dialects will help the faith and fan the love of the Christian disciples, and spread abroad the Saviour's name among the heathen in the new songs sung in their hearing by the converts at their work, or by the way, and in their worship in the church and family. As a mission, we bless God for all that our departed brother was, and for all that he did. He was God's gift to us, and while we fondly looked forward to a longer life, and further conquests in the new and vast region on which he had entered with impaired strength but undiminished zeal, we bow to our Father's will in his removal on the 4th of April. His grave stands on the borders of the great kingdom of Manchuria, the advanced post of Christian conquests, beyond the northern limits of China. The little mound casts its shadow over many lands, for where is Burns not loved and mourned? But his life is the Church's legacy, and loudly calls for self-sacrifice and devotion to the cause of Christ, and especially the cause of missions. His indomitable spirit beckons us to the field of conflict and of victory, while his four last converts, the conquest of his death-bed, stand like sentinels by his grave, and pray and long for the advance of the Church's hosts."

In stature he was about the middle height, of strong, muscular, and well-knit frame, and with a ruddy and pleasant countenance, which is but faintly recalled by the worn and aged features of his Chinese picture, but which will doubtless appear again in glorified form when He comes who maketh all things new.

IN MEMORIAM.

As gazed the prophet on the ascending car,
Swept by its fiery steeds away and far,
So, with the burning tear and flashing eye,
I trace thy glorious pathway to the sky.
Lone like the Tishbite, as the Baptist bold,
Cast in a rare and apostolic mould;
Earnest, unselfish, consecrated, true,
With nothing but the noblest end in view;
Choosing to toil in distant fields unsown,
Contented to be poor and little known,
Faithful to death. O man of God, well done!
Thy fight is ended, and thy crown is won.
  God shall have all the glory! Only GRACE
Made thee to differ. Let us man abase!
With deep, emphatic tone thy dying word,
Thy last, was this—"Thine is the kingdom, Lord,
The power, and glory!" Thus the *final* flame
Of the burnt-offering to Jehovah's name
Ascended from the altar! Life thus given
To God, must have its secret springs in heaven.
  O WILLIAM BURNS! we will not call thee dead,
Though lies thy body in its narrow bed

In far-off China. Though Manchuria keeps
Thy dust, which in the Lord securely sleeps,
Thy spirit *lives* with Jesus: and where He,
Thy Master, dwells, 'tis meet that thou shouldst be.
There is no death in his divine embrace!
There is no life but where they see His face!
  And now, Lord, let thy servant's mantle fall
Upon another! Since thy solemn call
To preach the truth in China has been heard,
Grant that a double portion be conferred
Of the same spirit on the gentler head
Of some Elisha who may raise the dead,
And fill the widow's cruse, and heal the spring,
And make the desolate of heart to sing;
And stand, though feeble, fearless, since he knows
Thy host angelic guards him from his foes;
Whose life an image fairer still might be
Of Christ of Nazareth and Galilee—
Of thine, O spotless Lamb of Calvary!
  China, I breathe for thee a brother's prayer:
Unnumbered are thy millions. Father, hear
The groans we cannot! Oh, thine arm make bare,
And reap thy harvest of salvation there.
The fulness of the Gentiles, like a sea
Immense, O God, be gathered unto Thee!
Then Israel save; and with his saintly train,
Send us Immanuel over all to reign!

H. GRATTAN GUINNESS.

APPENDIX.

ADDITIONAL REMINISCENCES.

Additional communications from Mr. Douglas and Mr. Swanson reached my hand just as the first edition of this work had left the press. They seem to me, however, so valuable that I gladly avail myself of the opportunity of a fresh impression to insert here as much of them as is compatible with the limits of a brief appendix. Mr. Douglas devotes the chief part of his letter to the correction of certain "mistakes and mis-statements, some made by opponents, some by over-zealous or ill-informed friends." In case I may myself in the foregoing pages have used expressions, or quoted words used by others, fitted in any measure to encourage such errors, I am very glad to be able in this way to provide the corrective. Mr. Douglas first notices the very prevalent impression,

"(1) *That he was gloomy.* He was indeed often reserved towards strangers; and his faithful rebukes of sin might tend to create an impression that his mind was gloomy. But in fact he was genial and hearty. Especially among his friends this warm and happy character of his mind was very conspicuous. Though he usually liked to live alone (especially in a room connected with some chapel or hospital), so as to be fully master of his own time, yet he was fond of having some missionary as a companion in going about the country: and he delighted to spend his evenings with missionaries and their families, or with any like-minded friend. He had a keen sense of the ludicrous, and was fond of a hearty laugh, which was often the effect of his conversation when he unbent his mind among his intimate friends. Jokes upon *words* he did not relish: the form of the ludicrous which was most congenial to him was what may be in general styled the humorous, as, for instance, anecdotes about remarkable adventures or strange mistakes, examples of unexpected skill in escaping from a dilemma or a difficulty, and singular traits of national peculiarities or personal character. I recollect one occasion, when . . . on board the *Challenger*, while reading aloud the speech of Tertullus before Felix, he burst into a fit of laughter, and having recovered his composure explained that it appeared irresistibly ludicrous as being so like what a Chinaman would say in similar circumstances. He had a wonderful fund of varied anecdotes, both of the graver and the lighter sort, connected with his wide-spread evangelistic labours in so many lands, which gave a great charm to his society. In him also was well exemplified that text, 'Is any merry? let him sing psalms.' He was extremely fond of sacred music, and delighted in singing psalms and hymns, both alone and with others, both in English and Chinese. His acquaintance with music was a great help to him in his mission work, as well as a means of keeping up his cheerful, joyous spirit.

"(2) *That he was careless of his comfort: e.g.*, such absurd stories as his being ready to leave England for China with a carpet-bag; that he went about in China without a change of dress, 'ready with only scrip and staff,' as I see in a recent Dublin tract. The fact is that he was exceedingly careful of his health, and for that reason, of his comfort, both in regard to clothing and food and general care of himself. Of clothing he had always an abundant supply suited to the different states of weather. . . . When I began to go with him into the country, I was struck with the large quantity both of bedding and body-clothes which he carried with him (more than I have seen other missionaries use), for we must carry our bedding as well as our changes of dress. His explanation to me was that he always made himself comfortable wherever he went, just as if he were at home. He was also very particular about having his dress thoroughly clean and well arranged. In summer he was so careful in airing his clothes that it was a frequent proviso in appointing a meeting to consult on any matter, 'if it be not a north wind,' as that is the best wind for airing clothes. . . .

"As to *food* (both its material and its preparation) he was very particular. While in Amoy and its neighbourhood he used to eat heartily, especially of pork. I suspect that his spare diet at Nieu-chwang must have been the result of a general feeling of weakness and want of appetite. I recollect hearing that before his last illness he was observed to complain of being exhausted even by the walk (about a mile) from his lodging to the foreign settlement there. But whatever was the cause of the spare diet at Nieu-chwang, the quantity of his food while at Amoy was much about the same as that of his brethren.

"When at all out of sorts he was very careful of himself, and he used to recommend similar care to others. He used often to blame me for not taking what he considered sufficient rest in the hot weather.

"(3) *That he was generally engaged in pioneering work*, a mistake into which even Mr. Johnston has fallen.[1] The fact is that he was usually assisting other missionaries in work already begun. A phrase very frequently on his lips was, 'Do not let any one be sent out to co-operate with me: I co-operate with others.' I am not certain of the exact character of his work during the three years before he first came to Amoy. Certainly about half that time he was residing in Hong-Kong and in Canton, and during most of the remainder was co-operating, I think, with the German missionaries. The only periods of any length after that time that can be properly called 'pioneering' are his first stay at Swatow (somewhat over two years), and the few months of his residence at Nieu-chwang. But in the Swatow region he had been preceded by the German missionary Lechler; indeed one special reason of his going there was to carry on the work of Mr. Lechler, which had been for some time suspended, and soon after going there he found one of Lechler's converts, a man of very decided character. In his later visits to Swatow, as well as at Amoy, Fuh-chow, Shanghai, and Peking, almost his whole work was co-operating with the missionaries previously settled there, usually in stations already begun or a place where a spirit of inquiry had been already excited.

"(4) *That he was a Baptist.* This report has been industriously spread in some quarters, being founded on the facts that he never administered baptism, and that on some occasions he worked along with Baptists. I need hardly remind you that he firmly held the scriptural authority of infant baptism, and also of sprinkling, whether as applied to children or adults; and that his sole reason for never baptizing was the desire of so avoiding anything like a *pastoral* relationship. Again, his occasional co-operation with Baptists merely arose from the catholic spirit in which he could co-operate with Christians of *any* evangelical denomination, along with the circumstance that on one or two occasions the persons who happened to be most thrown in his way were Baptists. By the same style of reasoning it would be easy to prove him an Independent, a Medothist, a Lutheran, or even an Episcopalian, or all of them at once.

---

[1] Mr. Johnston's view and that of Mr. Douglas I think admit of reconciliation. Mr. J., whom I have quoted with so much pleasure in the body of the work, meant, as I understood him, to distinguish my brother's work simply as *evangelistic*, and not *pastoral*, and on that account necessarily in large measure that of a pioneer—visiting and exploring fields of missionary labour rather than statedly cultivating them. This I think really was the distinctive idea and purpose of his life, though in prosecuting this object he made the existing missions and missionary churches in every case his starting-point, and thus spent much of his time and strength in co-operating with other missionaries. His labours on the mainland opposite Hong-Kong, his early excursions amongst the villages around Amoy, his journeys along the canals and rivers of the Shanghai plain, his tentative operations at Swatow, his last days at Nieu-chwang—were of the former sort; his labours at Hong-Kong, at Amoy, at Fuh-chow, at Peking—were of the latter. I am glad, however, that Mr. Douglas has called special attention to an aspect of his missionary life which had been too much overlooked. I. B.

"(5) *That he approved of the mode of action of the Plymouth Brethren or of the 'China Inland Mission.'* I need hardly say—as it is so abundantly manifest—that he had no sympathy with the *doctrines and church order* (or rather the want of definite doctrine and utter absence of church order) which characterize the Plymouth Brethren. . . .

"In regard to his own mode of action, he did not set himself up as a pattern to be copied in these respects. On the contrary, he was accustomed to defend his mode of action, not as a rule to be followed by others, but as a course suited to the special character of his own mind.

"He used to speak of himself as one of those supernumeraries or light-armed soldiers of whom a *small proportion* may be attached to the regular troops. . . .

"As regards the so-called 'Inland Mission,' his previous acquaintance with Mr. Taylor, and his catholic manner of 'hoping all things,' led him indeed in a private letter (published apparently without any authority) to express his hope that good might come of that movement; but in that very letter he stated very distinctly his disbelief of the practicability (under existing circumstances) of establishing missionaries permanently at such vast distances in the interior as 'all the provinces where there is yet no missionary.'

"He has often given expression to his decided opinion that the standard of the qualifications of missionaries ought not to be lowered, as what the Chinese field specially needs is not merely men who can preach a little simple truth, but men fully furnished with the *gifts and learning*, as well as the piety and zeal, necessary for wisely watching over the infant churches and native assistants, and for the great work of teaching and training the future ministry of China. Over and over he decidedly refused offers of that very kind of under-educated labourers which the 'Inland Mission' so largely employs.

It is a common mistake in determining the views of any historical person to use passages from all parts of his writings, and incidents from all periods of his life, as of equal value, regardless of the law of change and progression which acts on all human minds. To the influence of this law Mr. Burns was no exception. It may be well to indicate a few examples.

"(1) *As to Residence at the Ports.*

"In his earlier letters there is often found a tendency to depreciate work at the treaty ports, and a desire that missionaries should mainly reside or travel about in the interior. But afterwards, as he found the difficulties of obtaining healthy residences in the interior, and as the climate began to tell on his own constitution, originally so very strong, and as the importance appeared of having strong churches at these centres of ever-increasing influence, his views were gradually modified; and while he still urged a greater amount of country work than had been usual in other missions, he was more alive to the need of having comfortable healthy residences at the treaty ports, as points from which to act on the interior. Of this no stronger proof could be desired than the fact that when he left Peking it was not to go to any of the great cities in the *interior*, but to settle at the port of Nieu-chwang, a place of comparatively small population, which derives its chief importance from being the *treaty port* of Manchuria.

"(2) *As to Colloquial Hymns.*

"During the year (1858-9) that we were together at Amoy, he strenuously opposed the attempt to make more *colloquial* hymns than the thirteen then in use (made by the Rev. W. Young, now in Australia), and urged in opposition the claims of hymns in the *literary style*, especially of the 'Sin-si hap-swan,' a collection in the literary style which he had made some years before. But very rapidly he not only changed these views, but set himself vigorously to make hymns in the colloquials of Swatow, Fuh-chow, Peking, and of Amoy itself. The hymns in the literary style are no longer used at public worship in the chapels here; and in the collection of sixty colloquial hymns used by the Presbyterian Church here (under the care of the American mission and our own) there are five hymns almost exactly as they came from his hand, and five others which are about half by him, and there is about the same proportion in the hymn-book of the L. M. S. At Swatow, Fuh-chow, and Peking also many of his colloquial hymns continue to be used in the several missions."

In a subsequent letter Mr. Douglas sends me the following deeply touching document, the last lines ever traced by the dying missionary's hand, and bearing date about a month after his parting message to his mother.

"It is very touching," writes Mr. Douglas, "to copy out again these minute details about his friends, especially his Chinese friends, and that wonderful composing of his own epitaph when face to face with death: so calm and collected and peaceful; and those last strokes which he ever traced with the pen, his own old well-known hand, yet strangely altered, irregular and trembling from extreme weakness—'Wm. C. Burns,' on that 25th February when all his intercourse with *old* friends, even by pen and paper, came to an end:"—

"FOR REV. CARSTAIRS DOUGLAS, AMOY.

"I got a severe chill at the end of the year, which has resulted in a low fever, preventing me from getting refreshing sleep, and so bringing down my strength. In case I should be taken away, I take my pen to say that Dr. Watson will send down my boxes to your address when he meets with a suitable vessel. The key of the overland trunks I shall inclose in this (there is a spare one), and in one of them the keys of the other boxes will be found. The Chinese clothes can be given to old acquaintances, among whom do not forget Tan-tai.[1] The Dr.'s watch can be restored to him; my own watch can go home with the overland trunks when there is an opportunity. There is some new flannel and a few pairs of new socks which are at your disposal. Of four coloured silk handkerchiefs please give two to my friend Mr. A. Stronach. I would wish all my packets of letters (which Mr. Swanson took out of my chest of drawers, and put along with books, &c., in a box—you must remember it) to be put in one of the overlands, and sent home along with such as are at present in the boxes. I suppose it will be best to prepare a grave-stone at Amoy, and send it up well packed. For the inscription I would suggest, 'To the memory of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, A.M., missionary to the Chinese from the Presbyterian Church in England. Born at Dun, Scotland, April 1st, 1815. Arrived in China, November, 1847. Died at Nieu-chwang . . . 1868, aged 53. 2 Corinthians v. chapter.'

"I have more than 300 taels at the British consulate, and when all local expenses are paid, Dr. Watson will remit what remains to your address to pay for the grave-stone, my subscription for Pechuia, &c. As to my present state of feeling, I may refer to the words of Paul, Phil. i. 23, &c. &c.

"Port of Nieu-chwang, Jan. 22d, 1868."

[Thus far in his own hand: what follows is written by dictation.]

"P.S. Of my Chinese articles the following I should like sent home to my relatives in my overland trunks:—1st, A new port-wine coloured camlet 'ma-kwa.'[1] 2d, A long gown of blue merino (or some such fabric), clean, though not new. 3d, A woven silk or floss sash. 4th, A Chinese leather-covered pillow.[2] 5th, A new Chinese pouch (for tying round the abdomen). 6th, A pair of ivory chop-sticks. A feather fan.

---

[1] One of the deacons of the L. M. S. at Amoy.

"7th, The long fur gown may perhaps suit yourself as a winter house-gown. The fur ma-kwa may be given to the native pastor of the Hok-tai church.[3] To Tau-lo, the pastor of the Sin-koe—a native church,[4] may be given a blue gown of heavy and excellent silk, along with a pair of Chinese leggings of flowered blue silk, and *not* wadded. The cloth ma-kwa with silk lining may be given to Tan-tai.[5] Four or five good gowns I would wish sent down to Swatow to be distributed to A-kee and Kilin of our mission, and A-sun and I-u of the American mission. For *A-kee*[6] may be selected a blue silk gown of inferior quality to that given to Tau-lo, also a full-length camlet ma-kwa which I have worn a good deal. Then you must still find gowns for such men as I-ju,[7] Liong-lo,[8] Bu-liet.[9] Other articles you can distribute north and south[10] among the most worthy assistants and members, not forgetting my old friend Nui[11] at Pechuia. In making your distribution please consult with your brethren Messrs. Cowie and Macgregor.[12]

"I already have asked you to give two silk coloured handkerchiefs to Mr. A. Stronach. Of the three remaining white ones please take for yourself, and ask Mr. Cowie and Mr. Macgregor each to accept a coloured one.

"Mr. Sandeman's Geneva watch which I left in Mr. Swanson's hands, I should wish returned to his mother (Mrs. Sandeman) or sister.

"The knife, fork, and most, if not all, of the spoons in the leather case which you gave me belong, I believe, to Mr. Swanson, and should be returned to him.

"The chest of drawers and cane-bottomed couch I leave for the use of the mission: the members can arrange at any time who has the most need of them. There are three volumes of Morrison's Dictionary, the gift to me of the Rev. Mr. Keedy of London, which have been lent to

---

[1] Sort of jacket worn *over* the long gown.

[2] Stiff and round.

[3] Also called Tek-chhiu-kha, or the second church of Amoy.

[4] Or first church of Amoy.

[5] Of L. M. S.

[6] Who was converted under Mr. Lechler before Mr. B. went to Swatow.

[7] One of the first Pechuia converts, now elder and helper at Chióh-bey.

[8] Assisting the Americans.

[9] Of Pechuia.

[10] That is from Chin-chow to Khi-boey.

[11] The cloth-dealer.

[12] Mr. Swanson had not then got back.

Mr. Johnson of the Amer. Bapt. Mission, Swatow, for a number of years. He should be requested to give a receipt for the same, and promise in case of his leaving China, or prospective decease, to return these to our mission at Swatow.—25th February, 1868.

[Signed with *his own* hand.] "WM. C. BURNS."

Mr. Swanson has written an important paper on the general history of the Amoy mission, of which I cannot now avail myself, but which I hope will appear in another form. The following glimpse, however, of my brother's last visit to Amoy is so bright and life-like that I gladly insert it here:—

"In 1862 he came here from Fuh-chow. He arrived in the spring of that year, and remained in Amoy till August of the year following, when he left for Peking. Mr. Douglas left Amoy for a furlough home in June of 1862. It was during this last visit that I learned to know, love, and value Mr. Burns: and I can never think of that time without recalling our companying together, and without thanking God for permitting me to know him as I then did. Although he refused to take any part with me in the examination of inquirers, the administration of ordinances, and the general business of the mission, yet his labours and his advice were most valuable. He visited the stations regularly, and preached every Sabbath-day. I can recall how heartily and zealously he threw himself into the breach to help the persecuted brethren at Khiboey; and I am certain that it was his wisdom and tact that were mainly instrumental in bringing matters to a happy conclusion in that region.

"At that time our American brethren and we jointly had a station at Chang-chow. The native church there had long been forced to meet in a small, confined house, quite unfit for a chapel in such an immense city as Chang-chow. They succeeded in getting a large and commodious house suited for a chapel. We expected some disturbance at its opening, and our expectations were not unfounded. There was some trouble. Mr. Burns went up soon after the opening, stayed in the chapel for two weeks or so, and then Dr. Carnegie and I joined him there. The doctor soon became most popular, and patients came crowding in. Mr. Burns, myself, and the native evangelists had some excellent opportunities for preaching, and I remember yet how delighted he seemed to be to see us all as busy as we could be with this work.

"During this time Mr. Burns also made several visits to our *then* most northerly station, Anhai. We frequently went there as well as to the other stations together. On these journeys he has again and again given me accounts of his life and labours in Scotland, England, and Canada. We often sat up till far on in the morning—I, a most eager listener to the deeply interesting details of his labours.

"While we were in Amoy together we saw each other twice daily. He lived in a room in the Amoy Medical Missionary Hospital, and there I went to see him daily at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, he coming to see me about 5 o'clock in the evening. He had always some very nicely boiled rice and a delicate little pork-chop for me, and used to force me to eat. Oftentimes I used to feel weary and oppressed with a number of things connected with such a scattered and extensive field of labour as that of our mission. I can yet recal his loving, kindly manner, how he used to pat me on the shoulder, lead me to the side of the room where stood a large bamboo couch, and kneel down and pray. These prayers I shall never forget. I was young and inexperienced then, and felt keenly the weight of responsibility that was on me, but he always had a kind word to encourage me. I can remember well one such day when I felt more than usually troubled on account of some mission matters, when he clapped me on the back and told me to keep my mind easy, for if I were pastor of a church at home, and had some troublesome elders or cantankerous deacons, it would be worse for me than even such trials as I had in Amoy.

"But I cannot omit one thing so bright, so profitable to us during that brief season. He spent most of his evenings in the houses of his brother missionaries, and in our house he was naturally more frequently than in any other. He was one of the most genial, cheerful men I ever met, but he took great care as to when, how, and where he unbent himself. The presence of any one with whom he had not full sympathy immediately made him quiet, and I have seen him sit long in such circumstances without uttering a single word.

"His short expositions at family worship were always remarkable and most deeply interesting. Mrs. Swanson and he were great friends, and seemed always to understand one another. I remember yet his great anxiety about her at one time when she was rather indisposed.

"He left me for Peking in August, 1863. I saw him on board ship, and very soon after our getting on board the ship left the inner harbour. Next day I saw she was still at anchor off Amoy. I went out to see him, and stayed two hours with him. We prayed together, and I turned to leave. He sent his love to my wife, and I think I hear him yet saying, 'The Lord bless her and Willy' (my little boy) 'and yourself.' I saw him no more, and shall not see him again till, I trust, we meet above."

Long months ago, with anxious heart and sore,
We prayed for him, whom our dim fancy's sight
Saw, faintly labouring, 'mid the harvests white,
On Sinim's distant shore;
For selfishly we grudged that one who bore
So well the fiercest onset of the fight,
And used so well the arms of heavenly might,
Should give the conflict o'er.
But even while, with blind, weak love we pray'd
Thus for the toil-worn, bowed, and weary one,
The Master, more compassionate, had said—
"Rest now, thou soldier, rest! Servant, well done!
"Let others hold thy plough, and wield thy blade,
"And wrestle for the crown which thou hast won."[1]

July 8, 1868. W. B.

---

[1] Lines by an unknown hand, which appeared in the public prints immediately after the tidings of Mr. Burns' death reached Scotland.

THE END.

GLASGOW: W. G. BLACKIE AND CO., PRINTERS, VILLAFIELD.

DATE DUE

DEMCO NO. 38-298

GOULD LIBRARY
EASTERN NAZARENE COLLEGE

NEASE LIBRARY EASTERN NAZARENE COLLEGE
BV3427.B83 B87 1885X GOULD
Burns, Islay/Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C. B

Gould BV 3427 B83B87 1885x
Burns, Islay. 795
Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C.
Burns.

DATE	ISSUED TO

Gould BV 3427 B83B87 1885x
Burns, Islay. 795
Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C.
Burns.

DEMCO